The ENCHANTED GARDEN

HENRY JAMES FORMAN

Lorna T. Niedringhaus

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Lorna Niedringhaus

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

By Henry James Forman

NOVELS

Fire of Youth
The Enchanted Garden
The Captain of His Soul
The Man Who Lived in a Shoe

TRAVEL

The Ideal Italian Tour
In the Footprints of Heine
London: An Intimate Picture

A girl was kneeling over him and peering into his face, a girl with puzzled questioning eyes.

FRONTISPIECE. *See page* 80.

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

BY

HENRY JAMES FORMAN

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

A. D. RAHN

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TO
HAL

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what forms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

—A. E. Housman.

L'histoire d'un homme est donc
l'histoire de tous les hommes?

—Dumas: *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne.*

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THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

A WORD

Like some alchemist who saw, or thought he saw, the grain of gold transmuted from a baser metal, or like the treasure-seeker bending over the treasure amid the dark soil he has turned up, I tell myself that I have hit upon the secret — upon one of the secrets — behind the appearances of life.

Not that I believe life to be a formula, or an equation, or a capsule. But it is, undoubtedly, something shaped, controlled and molded like a statue — monstrous in its simplicity, a strange god, gigantic, colossal, awe-inspiring before you learn the mystery of the priestcraft in the crypt beneath the pedestal.

Here on my peaceful Island, surrounded by every instrument and safeguard of tranquillity, I find myself suddenly lashed by an irresistibly urgent desire to write this narrative. A throbbing fire of eagerness pulses in my veins and I feel myself driven to an unaccustomed pen. Call it a tribute, an escape, or a fragment of the eternal human quest for truth — as you will. In any case, I believe I have found something and I burn to tell it.

The secret, I am willing to swear, is woman.

There are, of course, the motives and appearances of ambition, riches, adventure, travel — lust — a thousand

things. But to my mind they are a thousand disguises — masks, masks! Behind them all lurks the one fact, the one face and shape — that of woman. She is adventure and art, she is chance, vicissitude, romance, home, travel, life and death.

If life is a mechanism, she is the only goddess in the machine. On earth, in men's lives, she is all, — the instrument, the potter and the wheel. In human affairs she holds direct from the Deity.

Why, I sometimes cry out inwardly, should she have so much power, the sorceress? And then I must laugh at my own emotional absurdity. Nevertheless, had I a son, I should give him but one blessing ere I confided him to life:

"Heaven defend you in the women you meet!"

For in that one thing lies everything. . . .

Every human being, so it is said, has at least one story, could he but tell it. And despite a host of shortcomings and lack of skill, I am about to attempt the story of the one human being I know best and therefore, inevitably, least of all on earth.

PART I

THE ESCAPE

CHAPTER I

FLIGHT

He was an inch, perhaps a trifle less than that, under six feet, well-muscled, but by no means muscle-bound, with a squarish jaw, a slight wave to his chestnut hair and eyes of a dark and brooding blue. The slight forward droop to the shoulders in one of his height gave him peculiarly the effect of being forever bent on some secret quest that might not wait, but that could on no conceivable account be given away. A quiet controlled eagerness seemed to emanate from his young limbs, an eagerness, you felt, that life itself could not balk, — an eagerness for life.

I see him now with those eyes and that sense of suppressed excitement that he imagined, poor soul, gave him almost the appearance of lounging, moving listlessly about the wharves of Boston in an old and faded, thread-worn suit, especially unearthed for the occasion, looking for a ship. He was no sailor then, God knows, and scarcely a man, for he was in his nineteenth year. It was insufferably hot at the end of August and waves of heat were visibly drifting upward from the steel sides of dirty-looking tramp ships, from second-rate liners and from such other miscellaneous craft as lay alongside those uninspiring wharves.

Now and then a watchman on a boat would lazily gaze over the bulwark rail with a speculative aqueous eye at the approaching youngster and send a jet of dark-red tobacco juice into the dirty waters below, before the possible disturbance of answering a question.

Uninspiring as were those docks and wharves, they were nevertheless a fairy palace to the boy. The strange smells of spices mixed with the aroma of leather, of wire-bound bales in brown gunny sacking, of coarse burlaps marked with mystic numerals, words and symbols, an immensity of crates and boxes, the grind of small truck wheels and the occasional shouts and swearing of listless stevedores, — all these elements, drab enough in their way, combined into a powerful black magic that to the lad that hot August day was scarcely of this earth.

He was looking for a ship,— this boy who had barely sailed so much as a catboat without guidance. He had begun his quest with Rowe's Wharf because the name was a familiar one, but he left it with a rapidity of retreat that would have justified a leper camp, merely because he saw a glittering excursion steamer there with paddle wheels. That domestic trimness shocked his sense of decency and high resolve. He had come to seek he knew not what, and the placid old tub painted white for bobbing in home waters was a nauseating offense to him.

The dirty rusty-looking tramps, smeared and blistered, farther on toward Charlestown, however, began to bring him a deep, a soul-filling satisfaction. These were of the Sea, — of the sea in the abstract, that forever lures life because it gives life, that has made and unmade men and nations, that is the source of dreams, more precious than bread.

The lure of the sea, however, the disturbing call of

adventure, romance, was, if not secondary, at least strangely intermingled with another force working in the boy's throbbing breast that hot August morning. He had been challenged and had proudly, not recklessly, with a defiant lift of startled eyes to startling eyes, quietly accepted the challenge. It was one of those cries so meaningless to the mature of any wisdom or experience, so ineluctable to the young — a dare! Where character has not yet hardened and proved itself, it rushes like hot liquid metal into the first mold set for it, however useless the form, however meaningless the result. The perturbed youth that summer morning was for the first time in his life actively establishing his own character. He was looking for a ship and beneath the assumed quietude of his exterior the heady, rushing current of his blood was flooding his heart and brain like a mill race over a dam. All other thought was swirling and scattering like so much flotsam on the stream of that one impetuous volition. He must and he would find a ship.

The steady succession of refusals, of vague and evasive answers, however, was causing a darkness like a cloud to settle on his enterprise, when suddenly he came face to face with a short, heavy-set man walking up and down on the quay beside a trim, yachtlike, newly painted green and white schooner.

Something in his heart leaped forward and he gulped visibly before addressing this straw-hatted, alpaca-coated, heavy-mustached little man intent upon his own thoughts, a man whom he would not have remarked in a crowd, but who now, on a sudden, seemed charged with the gravity, importance and authority of all the world, — of the quivering mysterious future.

"Do you know who is captain of this ship?" the youth inquired bravely and it seemed to him miraculous that

the words had issued so smoothly from his parched throat, from his dry lips.

"Why?" and the little man cocked a quizzical twinkling eye at him from under the brim of his straw hat that seemed to twitch suddenly upward in mocking challenge. All the world, even to that inanimate straw hat, was bent upon challenging the youthful untried entity of his manhood.

"I'm looking for a job — a berth," he corrected himself — "before the mast."

The little man's face purpled a shade deeper, he threw back his head and laughed joyously. A humorist, evidently!

The young man turned scarlet to the ears and grinned uncertainly, painfully.

"Before which mast?" demanded the little man crisply, his eyes still dancing with laughter. "I've got three there!"

It was now the lad's turn to laugh, but he checked himself shortly.

"Oh, I don't pretend I've had much experience," he muttered. Then in a firmer tone, "But I'd like to have — and I like this ship."

"Like this ship," repeated the other slowly, thoughtfully eyeing him. "Good taste, lad, good taste — that's something," he muttered, as if to himself.

"Brandon!" he called, suddenly spinning around like a teetotum on his heel toward the ship.

"Aye, aye, sir," responded a voice from the after deckhouse and a smooth-shaven ruddy face under a visored cap appeared first and then a slim tall young body clad in blue serge followed it and stood leaning over the after rail.

"Come down here, Brandon — want to see you."

The man called Brandon moved forward, seemed to

slide down the narrow gangplank to the quay and stood beside them attentively.

"Yes, Captain Flitch?" he murmured.

"Look at this lad, Brandon — think you could make a sailor of him?" His voice now carried a new, a somewhat exaggerated tone of serious authority, — the authority of the short man in power, always a shade over-assertive and always slightly amusing.

"Why — yes, sir," said Brandon, slowly scrutinizing the lad from head to foot. "I've made sailors of worse material."

"How old are you?" the captain turned upon the youth abruptly.

"Twen—twenty-one, sir," and he could have bitten his tongue for stammering words that he had so often rehearsed both vocally and mentally.

The captain shot a quick darting glance at Brandon but made no comment.

"Where are you from?" he demanded.

"Up-state," was the reply — "from the country."

"Truth is," announced the captain, lifting his hat and wiping the perspiration from his forehead with a blue cotton handkerchief, "we're short a man. Were sailing without one. And here is this ——" he turned to Brandon again. "Question is, is a landlubber better than nothing at all?"

Brandon grinned and glanced at the lad.

"Weren't all sailors landlubbers sometime?" The lad spoke up quietly.

The words seemed to fasten the attention of both seamen for a minute, and then something hard, a shade chilly, like a glint of steel, showed in Brandon's eyes.

"I'll take him, Captain, if you want me to," he snapped sharply and turned away, slightly lifting his eyes to the furled rigging of the ship.

"Right," crackled the captain in the same business-like voice. "Where's your dunnage?"

"Not far away," answered the lad and he felt an immense relief, momentary, triumphant, that immediately gave way to the heavy feeling of a grave decision.

"Go and get it then," snapped the captain. "Be back in an hour!"

The world of request was behind him. He had entered the world of command. He gave a succinct nod of the head, turned away quickly and ran for it with lowered eyes. Once under the shed of the wharf, among straggling stevedores in the cool, musty shade, he slowed up. It shot through his head like an arrow that there was time yet to draw back, to disappear in the indifferent crowd of the streets and return to the garden of sunlit everyday life. Who could trace him? Who would ever know? The thought was like a blow and, startled lest any one should see it, he glanced sharply over his shoulder. Captain and mate were standing where he had left them, with their backs turned upon him, their eyes fixed upon upon the rigging, evidently discussing their ship. They had trusted him, believed in him, in his word. No, he could not fool them. This world of men into which he had erupted almost in a whim, in a wave of something like intoxication, believed in him. His Rubicon was crossed. If a streak of "yellow" lurked within his make-up, now was the moment to efface it forevermore. They had accepted his word. There was no going back. Swiftly he made his way to the street, boarded an electric car going in the direction of the North Station, where that morning, upon arriving from Adams Rock, he had checked his bag.

The blind tumult in his brain made a somnambulist of him in the midst of the prosaic world that now seemed a jumbled incomprehensible nightmare. On a sudden

his eye would fall upon a face in the car, on a child's shoes turned toward him while their owner gazed joyously out of the window, on a stain in the opposite seat, but always these dots of old reality would recede to a pin's point, to nothingness, and again his wild speculation, that could fasten on nothing outside, turned inward.

" It's done — it's done —— " the grinding car wheels seemed to repeat endlessly. " There is no going back! "

CHAPTER II

INTO THE UNKNOWN

How indifferent are the ministers to some of life's greatest adventures! That came home to him only afterwards — well afterwards — when he thought of the dark close-cropped young man who had handed, with heavy briskness, his portmanteau across the counter of the parcel room in the North Station. The fellow didn't know!

With a new rush of dry-mouthed excitement that seemed to emanate from the pit of his stomach, he seized the bag and, like a mystic forcibly excluding the world from his meditation, he flung out of the station precincts and hurled it upon the rear platform of a car bound toward the ship. He dared not look back, dared not think or swerve by a hair's breadth from his course, lest his challenged manhood should suffer defeat. An old familiar being, a *he* that had been, that was, must then and there die the death, so that a new *he* could be born. The old Roderic Whitford familiar to him expired at the moment when he gave his name to the mate upon boarding the ship and put his signature to a paper in the chart room.

"Roderic Whitford," he had answered in a harsh uncertain voice that was strange to him, and the mate wrote "seaman" after his name. Then the old Roderic was securely dead and a new one, as unfamiliar and uncertain as the next hour, came tremulously into being.

No one had doubted him, no one had questioned his word or expressed the slightest suspicion of his promise to return. There he was and being taken for granted. He grew mentally at least an inch in stature. A tugboat with a sort of waddling movement like a duck was already chough-choughing toward the ship, and dirty men aboard her were preparing hawsers.

"Better cast off, Brandon," Captain Flitch came hustling aft. "We must be off. Oh, the lad!" he grinned faintly, ironically, as he perceived Roderic emerging from the chart room. "Just in time!"

The ship would have gone without him had he lingered! Promptly he lost the imaginary inch in stature!

Brandon, hurrying away to execute his orders, flung something unintelligible over his shoulder at Roderic. Bewildered and useless, the boy stood for a moment looking dazedly at the captain.

"Stow your duffle forward, lad," irritably cried the captain, who had no patience with bewilderment; "take an empty bunk" — and then, as though he remembered the quality of his new hand, Captain Flitch grinned quizzically with a twitching of his bushy mustache. "And keep out of the way," he added more kindly, "till some one shows you how to be useful."

With head lowered to hide a crimson flush and his heavy portmanteau bumping against his legs, Roderic ran forward among scurrying sailors and all but fell down the scuttle of the forepeak hold, where he sat panting for a space on his upright bag. Luckily there was not a soul in that dim abode to watch his darkling agony, for this was not the forecastle, but a sail room.

How long he sat there alone in his misery he could not have told. He was aware only that with every attempt to think something like a volcanic eruption hap-

pened in the midst of his brain and the fragments of his thoughts flew up skyward and fell in a jumbled state of débris in the crowded precincts of his skull. Not being Cæsar, he did not announce that the die was cast, the Rubicon crossed, or anything else philosophical. He merely heaved a profound sigh from the depths of his troubled being, like a groan, rose unsteadily and began groping and peering at the masses of spare sails.

Hastily he scrambled out of this in search of the real forecastle. He found it stealthily, the forward deck-house partitioned by a bulkhead into halves — the world of coffinlike bunks. The only one that seemed empty of human belongings was the lower one nearest the door and into that he lifted his bag and stood for a moment undecided. For the first time in his life he experienced what it felt like to be a prisoner. A wild desire to cry out, to shout in the dim recesses of that solitary compartment, leaped within him like a sporadic reversion to childhood. An impulse to flee, to beat his hands against the bulkheads shook him like a spasm of intense fear. He trembled for an instant like a leaf and his lips twitched. Then, as quickly as it had come, the strange feeling passed and he laughed bitterly at himself, a short tortured laugh that was like a sob.

"Talk about manly courage," he muttered to himself. "I'm full of it!" and he grinned piteously.

He must get out of this. Anything was better than this lugubrious forecastle with its strange odor mingled of paint, boots and either grease or turpentine, — he could not tell which. He turned to the door that had slammed behind him, then abruptly he paused. No, he could not go like this. Even his threadbare clothes were grotesquely anomalous when he recalled the mêlée of sailors in overalls, or gray undershirts, whom he had tried not to see as he ran the length of the deck with

his portmanteau. Luckily he had brought two blue shirts and a pair of overalls. Feverishly, he threw off his coat, began to undo the straps of his portmanteau and with the other hand to unbutton the striped madras shirt he was wearing. He was just climbing into those unsoiled overalls when he heard a shout outside.

"Here you, Whitford! Crawl out here and lend a hand!" It was Brandon's voice. He was stunned for an instant by the suddenness of the call. But immediately a wave of exultation leaped up in his blood. His heart was aflood with gratitude. He was called! Still buckling his shoulder straps he dashed out, bumping his shins against the high coaming, but oblivious of pain, and for a second he blinked like a mole in the dazzling light of sun, sea and sky.

"When I call you," rasped Brandon, eyeing him sharply, "you answer!"

"Yes, sir," muttered Roderic shamefacedly.

"Coil up those hawsers," growled Brandon, "and you, Carmichael," he turned to a lank, grizzled, weather-bronzed sailor of perhaps fifty-five, "I want you aft."

Carmichael, who had already begun coiling up those fat ropes, dropped his work with a sharp "Aye, aye, sir," and followed the mate without so much as a glance at Roderic. The mate was no less instantly oblivious of him. And by that careless disregard, had they but known it, those seamen soothed and humored the lad as though they had conferred upon him the freedom of a city. For some time he dated his admission to man's estate by that seemingly trivial and insignificant episode.

Some of the sails were already set and a southerly breeze coming up was beginning to fill and belly them with the magic force that to a landsman seems at first supernatural, the breath of God. The tugboat, that must have cast off just before he came on deck, was

waddling back noisily with what seemed to Roderic precisely the air of the duck had she espied the quondam ugly duckling in the shape of a swan. Men were in the rigging, on the shrouds; reefing, hauling and bracing, obeying hoarse orders and giving hoarse replies. Some were slewing tackle, reeving sail gear, making ready as for a holiday or a great enterprise. The orders, mostly unintelligible, that rang out over his head, seemed to flood him with soul-distending intoxication. The command to " loose and set foresail and main jib," the words to " hoist away on throat and peak halyards," though incomprehensible, stirred him like an ancient incantation. No one was paying the slightest heed to him. And therefore the one thought that surged above his nameless emotion centered upon making the most perfect coils of rope his hands could fashion.

Once clear of the roads a general easement of the tension seemed to settle like an atmosphere over the vessel. The captain, having set the course, left the wheel and took a turn about the ship. On a sudden his eye fell upon Roderic and his purple face assumed the look of some odd comic mask. With an agile step he approached him.

" What's your name, my lad? " he snapped.

" Whitford, sir."

The captain examined him for an instant without speaking and then the bushy mustache indicated that he was struggling with a grin.

" You know what you're shipped for, don't you? " he inquired with a half-comic, half-challenging graciousness.

" No, sir," was the answer.

" What! " he cried, darkling. " Don't you know where you're bound? "

" England, I suppose, sir," Roderic answered faintly.

" England! " repeated the little man in surprise.

"Didn't Brandon tell you? Thought you knew." His aspect was serious. "We're bound for Suva, lad — that's where we're bound. A long voyage and a stiff one. Make no mistake about that. Does it make any difference?" he added as an afterthought.

Roderic had no notion where Suva was. He was vaguely aware, however, that it was distant, remote, in the South Atlantic or the South Pacific. Both seemed equally far, incredibly far. But the tug of a heavy weight in his heart did not darken the certain light in his brain, — that it was too late to consider now, too late to draw back!

"N-no, sir," he finally gulped. "It makes no difference." The skipper's eyes glittered into his for an instant, inscrutably. There was a gleam of almost paternal kindliness in them, had Roderic not been too bewildered to read them.

"Anyway, that's our destination," the elder man murmured, half-absently. "But you'll be a sailor when you get there, my lad — if you look smart." And with that he left him.

Long afterwards Roderic learned how near the little man was at that moment to putting the ship about and sending him ashore. But with abrupt decision he turned and left the new hand alone.

Suva! With the dead helplessness of a spent swimmer sinking heavily, the roar of engulfing waters in his ears, Roderic's consciousness sank and struggled for an instant against a blackness that enclosed and overwhelmed it. He felt stunned and buffeted about.

"Suva! Suva!" kept throbbing through the noise in his ears. He had that morning written home that it would be a "good experience" to go to England and return in a few weeks. But — Suva! a voyage of

months, perhaps years! Would he ever return? Suva! That was different — overwhelmingly different!

The thought of home awakened him suddenly as a dull distant explosion might awake a sleeper. The sound and splash of rippling water against the sides of the ship came to his ears with a strange sense of matutinal freshness and novelty. The darkness had passed. He was broad awake, right enough, riveted to the spot where the captain had left him, and through his brain faintly reverberated — Suva!

Home! By the last mail this afternoon they would get the letter-card he had that morning posted from Boston, — a missive he had meant to intercept and destroy had his enterprise failed. It had not failed. It had succeeded only too well. To-night they would have the news of his departure, his flight. They would look for word of him shortly, for himself in a few weeks, not too late to enter college, for which he was ready. But here he was sailing for Suva — at the antipodes for all he knew — to return God knew when, if at all! The trickiness of life, the sardonic deceit of it, on a sudden came home to him for the first time; hit him squarely between the eyes. Everything in the past had been manageable, susceptible of plan and arrangement beforehand, for long periods ahead. Yet everything in the past had been of negligible importance compared to this. This was new, a thing of a savage, gripping, flinging whimsicality; and this was life! Willful, grotesque, unaccountable — life!

They would have the news at home to-night! They would not believe and yet they must believe! He would not return — and they would suffer. He had not meant quite that.

"Whitford!" crashed through his reverie like the sound of splintering wood in the voice of the mate. "Lay

aft with the helmsman and learn to steer a course. Wake up there! Look alive!"

"Yes — aye, aye, sir!" he blurted out, bracing himself against the sudden onslaught, and, crimson with confusion, he leaped to obey the order. "Wake up!" the mate had said. If he only knew the truth, the vast, overwhelming, unprecedented truth — his life going topsy-turvy so strangely, so suddenly! Nevertheless the mate mustn't catch him that way — mooning again. He had understood Brandon's order; that was something. He was grateful like a pilgrim for an alms in an alien, hostile land.

The grizzled sailor, Carmichael, his brown, rough hands fingering the spokes of the wheel lightly, but with the steellike vigor of a virtuoso's touch, glanced nonchalantly at him as he approached, and without speaking again riveted his eyes to the binnacle. Brandon kept pacing back and forth on the poop deck, his visored cap well over his eyes, looking now at the sea with an intense speculation, meaningful, mysterious. And Roderic, immensely anxious to penetrate and comprehend this mystery into which his own impetuous volition had so suddenly cast him, scrutinized no less intensely the symbols on the compass dial and followed the movements of the needle with a tumultuous beating of the heart, eager, fascinated, painfully alert, as though he were watching the finger of Fate.

CHAPTER III

MYRTLE THORNLEY

The black bat night, as a poet called it, is no black bat at sea. At sea the night is a state of being, an astral world, literally: a thing of immensities and wheeling constellations, instinct with life, raining influence upon every nerve, at once shrinking the sensitive conciousness to a pin's point and expanding it to universal dimensions. In the watch from eight to twelve, during which the mate had venturesomely posted him for lookout duty, Roderic had time to shake off some of the tumult and excitement of his momentous day. The loss of the sight of land was alone sufficient to leave him face to face with himself, to bring him the semblance of a realization of what he had that day brought about.

Was he actually here, or was this a dream? Had he actually been swept all in a moment from the bustle and clangor of the twentieth century, with its steam and its motor cars and hurry, into this alien world of a too real romance?

The wash of the sea against clipperlike bows settled like a soothing monotony upon his ears. His disturbed young spirit that had darted about flung and buffeted this way and that, like a bird in a gale, settled slowly, uncertainly, under the spell of the night, to a simulacrum of its old-time calm, though achingly aware that all the old time had been irrevocably swept away.

"Who is Roderic Whitford? — who am I?" was the

thought that the immensities overhead and all about invited as if with prayer. The infinity of his own insignificance rebounded like an elastic to the more negotiable query, "Why am I here?" Like a tape on a reel, his mind whirled back to the home he had fled, to the life he, in a rush of madness, had left behind, to the dimming world of yesterday.

He saw them there at home, with what an exquisite pang of heartache; he saw their faces coming out of the dim emptiness to his sight — troubled, perturbed, aghast. They were passing his letter back and forth under the reading lamp in the living room, scanning again and again his scrawled words, so incomprehensibly clear — discussing, questioning — questioning why had he done it? The kindly, stupid, sheeplike face of his stepmother, with its baffled look, in the circle of light, and the white scholarly face of his father, rigid in a strange perplexity: that picture stabbed him like a knife thrust.

Why had he done it? Was it the aloofness of his father, a man of a strange, almost strained piety, absorbed in theology on the one hand and, upon the other, in the narrow routine of a small Episcopal parish? No, it could hardly be that. Had not he, Roderic, had all the liberty he desired? There was school, there were companions, boating, tennis. There had been an emptiness about it all, to be sure, a void which books alone came near to filling, but had not quite fulfilled. His growing, maturing body was constantly demanding something else — action, adventure, life; he could hardly tell what — but something the settled routine of his Adams Rock existence had failed to give him.

They "babied" him; that was it. He was a man, he told himself with bitter stubbornness. He was a man — practically — and they babied him. His stepmother, poor simple-minded soul! In marrying the widowed clergy-

man with an eight-year-old son she saw her duty so plain that she insisted upon keeping the son at the age of eight for all the rest of his life.

That was it! No, it was not because they insisted upon his going to Trinity when he had desired Harvard. That — what would that have mattered? It was the other thing. They can't seem to stand a fellow's growing up; "can't seem to get it," he told himself in anguished justification, with a gulp in his throat. And by "they" he meant that world of elders who control and rule, who hold young lives in their hands, who chafe young mouths and ride them on the curb, — unless their fortune and wisdom are great enough to govern without seeming to govern.

The feeling of guilt toward one's elders, however, is not one that youth encourages for long. Deep in his heart, in the hidden chamber, Roderic was aware of another, a wholly different reason for his evasion. Under the glittering velvety night that covered everything except his inmost thoughts, he opened stoically the secret door of his being and beheld the face of a girl.

Myrtle Thornley! He saw her now as through a haze mingled of hostility, vivacity and grudging attraction. Her copper-tinted hair, her frankly luring eyes, her fleering lips troubled him still, though he was now defying her. With a poignant aching sense of regret he admitted to himself that she was measurably responsible for the sudden subversion of his life. She, with her three years' superiority in age, with her already formed gift for subtle play upon masculine emotions, had forced him, driven him to take this step. His unfledged emotional life had been like a fly in the net of her allurements.

How often he had hung upon every word and whisper of those mobile, faintly ridiculing lips! And those lips had dared him to some decisive, manly act. In a rush

of blinded pride he had accepted the challenge. Now, like the cavalier who descended into a lion's den to retrieve a lady's glove, he was shaken by a violent desire to stand again before her with a cool disdain, once his adventure was accomplished, ignoring her forevermore.

Yes — but could he ignore her? Even now, as he scanned mechanically the empty living darkness, a light tremor shook him. Once his thoughts began to run upon Myrtle, his identity was fixed by the ageless instinct of male assertiveness. No need now to ask himself who was Roderic Whitford. There was no questioning now; there was only the picture of her framed in brightness against the encompassing night. Fragments of conversation came floating to him ghostlike as he scanned the dark horizon. With a singular warmth and reality the very pitch and timbre of her voice emerged living and strangely actual from the boom of the breeze against sailcloth, the creaking of spars and ropes under tension.

"Love, Roderic? But what in the world do you know about love?" was a maddening query of Myrtle's that now as often before came hauntingly, mockingly, with a light infuriating raillery, upon his ear.

"Why shouldn't I know as much about it as you do?" he heard in his own voice, muffled and tremulous with an undefined shame, with a secret obsession of inferiority.

"Because I am heaps and heaps older than you." He both saw and heard the tantalizing lips utter composedly. "More than three years older. I am a woman, Roddy, and you are only a boy — don't you see, my dear?"

The very tone, always slightly mocking and cruelly unfeeling for the throbbing constriction in his throat, came back to him now as clear, clearer than in that dusk in his father's garden, whither the girl had come upon the pretext of an errand to his stepmother. He knew now, as he had felt then, that the errand was a sham. She

had come to find him, to tantalize him, playing with him as had happened often before, because he had compelled himself to avoid her even though he was hungering for her.

He saw the picture — with what aching vividness he saw it now — the garden under the dying light of the sunset, the perfectly clipped hedge of box, the beds of phlox and larkspur and dahlia, of gladiolus and peony, and a dozen or so of tenderly groomed rosebushes that his father's hand, descended from Kentish yeomen, seemed able to care for even while his mind was preoccupied with lengthy sermons upon the passing of Faith.

In the brooding summer twilight he saw the framed picture of that unexceptional little garden with the great mulberry tree at the farther side dripping deep shadows from its friendly foliage and Myrtle Thornley, with conscious coquetry, leaning against its darkened trunk and telling him that he was not a man.

"I am — I am a man!" he had retorted fiercely with the pain of a profoundly convincing emotion and a vague harrowing doubt in the depths of his soul. "Nobody could love you more than I love you," he had blurted on, "I don't care how old he may be!"

Myrtle had laughed lightly; laughed and looked away half-pensively, half-sneeringly, to the faint redness where the sun had been. Her parted lips showed a gleam of white teeth, an expression derisive yet encouraging.

"You're a dear sweet boy," with a fleeting tap of her fingers on his cheek, "and I like you very much. But——"

"What can I do to prove——" he had begun hoarsely, "to prove that I am——" he had broken off then, grinding his heel into the gravel. An unconquerable shame had prevented him from uttering the words

"a man." That was too burningly humiliating. His face flamed hot against the cool dusk.

"You see, you haven't lived yet, Roderic." She had continued with the provocative sweetness of the born coquette. "You haven't been anywhere; you haven't done anything. Girls don't marry or even engage themselves to schoolboys. You must see that — don't you?" There was a wounding reason in all she had said, but it was her way, her manner ——

"Been anywhere? —— Done anything? ——Is that it?

"I'll — I'll go away — go abroad, to sea — anywhere! I'll do things — and big things, too," he had stammered out, choking with rage — "then you'll see!"

Her burst of laughter had rankled like darts. He could have seized her shoulders and shaken the last vestige of laughter out of her.

"What nonsense!" she had answered with a sudden deceptive seriousness. "We're in the twentieth century, my dear. This is not a story book. You wouldn't dare. Besides, who would tell you," she had added sweetly, "when to put on your rubbers?"

His hands shot upward in a frenzy of anger. If only she had been a man, it had flashed paradoxically through his simmering passion, he should have felled her then and there. He had spun round suddenly, his hands dropped to his sides and he walked swiftly off toward the house.

"You're not very polite, Roddy," she had called after him cheerfully, "to leave me like this."

Abruptly he had stopped, turned back and approached her again.

"That's better," came a low murmur as though the mulberry tree had grown on a sudden vocal. "That's more like ——" but he had not allowed her to finish. He

had gripped her suddenly with his hot, trembling hands, kissed her fiercely upon the lips, and with a muttered, "This is the last time you'll see me," he leaped over the cherished flower beds, cleared the clipped hedge at a bound and disappeared into the soft August dusk.

And that was little more than twenty-four hours gone by. And Adams Rock, north of Boston, had all at once become so intolerably irksome and impossible that now he was irrevocably standing out to sea on a voyage almost as long as Magellan's, as long as Captain Cook's. No, no. It could not be! It was a dream from which he must surely awake.

"Light ahead of us!" He woke up suddenly to hear his voice cry out hoarsely, mechanically, as though a stranger were speaking through his throat. The machinery of his new environment had already sufficiently enmeshed him, was already using him as an integral part of itself, of its age-long irresistible empire.

"I was wondering when you'd see that light," the voice of Brandon crackled almost in his ear, and he felt his face growing hot. "Thought you were asleep or frozen. Better draw a pea-jacket from the lazaret if your brain freezes up." And as he stood confused and ashamed, he heard Brandon shout behind him.

"Swing her in about two points, Carmichael, till you pass that mud scow."

"Two points in, sir," came the rasping answer from the steersman and presently his eyes fixed upon the approaching "mud scow." Roderic, still tremulous with excitement at being caught woolgathering, descried a fantastically beautiful steamer ablaze with lights, radiant with power, warm, alive, heading toward the land — a ship perhaps four times the size of his own — a world by comparison, filling the sea with her sense of security. His heart leaped out to her like a wild thing caged, as

she passed on the port side of the schooner. He would have given all he possessed and the world besides to be aboard her at that moment. But — she passed — and, drawing away, left the darkness on the face of the waters the more intense as he stood alone between the flukes of the anchors, facing the immense solitude over that most daring, most mysterious of all human contrivances, — the cutwater of a ship cleaving the sea.

He turned furtively to glance once again at the disappearing lights of the steamer. The faint plume of smoke, ghostly, phantomlike, that drifted lazily to leeward, obscuring some of the stars, seemed to give a final tug to his heart strings. Quickly he faced about once again toward the unknown.

His tension easing gradually in the enveloping darkness, his mind once more swayed like a reed in a breeze, wavering now, now inclining sadly under the force, toward the picture of home, the square of the garden, the beds of bright flowers so securely enclosed by the hedge, sheltered by the maples and the overhanging mulberry, pervaded by the irresistible aroma of phlox and honeysuckle. How piercingly acute was that aroma now, how vivid the garden! All his past, his life, lay there enclosed by that hedge in those fragrant beds. Nevermore, perhaps, would he see it, but he knew with certainty that he could never forget it, not the faintest detail of it.

A bell suddenly clanged behind him and made him jump sharply. Eight bells! Men began to emerge from the forecastle and his relief came drowsily shouldering forward.

"Your watch below," muttered the man, scanning the dark horizon.

CHAPTER IV

THE GALBRAITHS

Once you commit the irrevocable, you open the way to the impossible. The rough but on the whole friendly world of the forecastle had shaken down to its seagoing life and, willy-nilly, Roderic was shaking down with it. There were bickerings and mutterings, rude jests and petty acts, a sense of work to be done, grudgingly at times, at times with a forced alacrity, very much as on land, except that this world was small. The very breadth of the horizon seemed to narrow all human existence to the handful of less than twenty men working the eight-hundred-ton schooner, the *Alice*. This tiny world, whose actuality would have appeared to him impossible a few days earlier, became within a week the only world of reality.

On and on, day by day, the ship went driving southward, with stretches of brilliant weather and occasional rain squalls, with definite duties that filled the days and broke the nights, that made rest hours precious gifts, that turned a few minutes of thought or dreaming into a priceless boon.

True to his word, Brandon the mate was making a sailor of Roderic, until every muscle in him ached with fatigue. The white bunk in the forecastle, despite draughts and smells and noises, became a glittering haven of refuge, a reward and a prize dearly earned. And if the men joked him about deadeyes and darning needles, or if Billy Stiles, the lad from Bangor, nearer than the

others to his own age, demanded whether he could as yet differentiate the main truck from a wheelbarrow, Roderic grinned with weary good humor and was asleep before he could think of an answer. He was awakened seemingly before he had gone to sleep. Always his dreams seemed to abound in sound and fury, that had no other origin than the rapping of handspikes or belaying pins and the shouts of command to wake up in there and bundle out upon deck.

A nautical apprenticeship is, after all, like any other. You learn much in the first full days, imagine you have acquired more wisdom than your elders in virtue of your peculiar brilliance or genius, and then, in shame, humiliation and self-searching, you really begin to learn. Roderic Whitford was no exception, save that with his New England canniness he endeavored not to parade his acquisitions until a riper experience corrected his blunders. In that way he was spared much ignominy. He was no "smart Aleck" for all his "eddication," the crew agreed, and that was something.

It was something to the crew and something to the skipper as well. That shrewd little mariner, who otherwise would not have deigned to waste time on a forecastle hand, often watched and scrutinized this decent silent lad whose story he read in a measure, though taking precious good care not to show it. He was not there to resolve doubts or to restore runaway boys, but to man and sail his ship on her course. In his heart, however, was a curious sense of warmth for the boy whose mind was not so sealed to him as that youth imagined.

The rest of the men were a handful of seamen ordinary enough, who for one reason or another were working Pacificward, — old hands who had grown up in windjammers, who had tried steamers and could not bear the hell of the stokehold, or the grime and dirt of the coal

bins: men from Australia, England, Sweden, Finland, who had been touched by the influence of the East; an Englishman from Portsmouth, another from Liverpool; a Nova Scotian and Billy of Bangor, whom an adventurous spirit drove as far away as he could find a ship to take him. Packet rats is a term extinct and obsolete, gone with the clipper era. It is a hard name for men who could face so much of toil and hardship and solitude, but so a hard man might have called some of them without serious misnomer.

Once in the Pacific they would scatter among the warm continents and islands, among ships and seaports where they could feel superior in their whiteness to the ubiquitous Kanaka. Some were possessed of homes there, or, at all events, of sweethearts. Some, like the Finns and the Swedes, those perpetual wanderers of the seas, would ultimately work their way homeward again, for the sight of snow and frozen landscape. With each of them, whatever his aim, or his obscure promptings, the quest of bread upon the waters was an essential, a dominating element.

With Roderic alone in that company the economic object of bread had played no decisive part. This the master of the *Alice* had apprehended from the moment he had first seen him. But even the seemingly dull-witted sailors were early suspicious of the truth. More than once he had overheard the phrase "a gentleman's son in disguise" as he passed a group smoking on a hatchway or at work on the main deck. As that expression is a piece of sardonic sarcasm when used of a sailor, a fact obvious from the look that went with it, Roderic shunned his mates at first with a nervously sensitive shrinking until he could prove himself worthy of his bread and salt meat.

It was with surprise, therefore, he learned what the

others had doubtless known and discussed from the first, — that the ship had passengers on board. He saw Captain Flitch pacing the deck with a gaunt bushy-browed white-clad old man, walking sternly erect and turning in his talk now at the rigging, now seaward, a face wrinkled and brown, the color of pump leather.

The owner of the *Alice* flashed through Roderic's mind, as he continued his humble task of polishing a capstan brass. But Billy of Bangor, who passed at that moment with a tarpot in his blackened hands and the visor of his cap over his neck, muttered from the corner of his mouth:

"Old Galbraith."

"Old Galbraith," he repeated to himself mentally. Owner or passenger, what difference could that make to him? About as much as a prima donna in the cabin could make to the coal-passer in the stokehold of a liner. Only too well had he been made aware by this time that he was the humblest and least significant of all human creatures on board.

Presently, however, when the captain left his passenger and disappeared into the chartroom aft, old Galbraith paused suddenly in his moody pacings alone and abruptly demanded of Roderic:

"You a Yankee?"

"Yes, sir," Roderic answered, and he could not have told what demon of forwardness or past repression made him add to this unofficial person, "and proud of it."

"Damn your pride," muttered the old man mechanically, stern-featured but without rancor. "I didn't think there was a Yankee sailor left in a seagoing vessel." Dominating, with a kind of wire-taut tremulous authority, the man stood over him with a look half of resentment, half of curiosity. Instantly anxious to mollify an old man, Roderic answered:

"I am not much of a sailor, sir, if it comes to that."

"No," retorted the other sharply. "But I'd make a sailor of you if this were my ship, I can tell you. Your first voyage, I take it."

"Yes, sir."

"Aye," muttered the stranger bitterly as if to himself. And with a biting scorn added:

"Ye'll find the work too hard for certain, and the pace too slow and the dirty steamers will get ye. —— Sailors!" he sniffed with a Parthian venom and a toss of his white old head at the ship in general, and strode off forward as abruptly as he had come.

Why old men should grow embittered and peppery to the point of grotesqueness like this one, or else dull and silent to the point of aloofness, like his father, was an insoluble mystery to Roderic. Why could not this one, for instance, who seemingly might have imparted so much of useful information, have been sweet and gentle, as youth generally pictures old men? But then again, as he stooped over his work, Roderic reminded himself that he was only the lowliest rated hand on board. Why should the old man, the friend of the captain, waste time upon such as he, when even the fat garrulous cook in the galley scarcely spoke to him as yet?

He gathered up his waste, his flannel rags and the polishing materials, rose up, stretching his legs and shoulders from their cramped positions and walked aft toward the cabin, the scene of the next installment in his menial labors, precisely as four bells rang out, the hour of ten in the morning, before which he was not to enter those hallowed abodes. But this was destined to be his day of surprises.

For facing him at the top of the companionway, with the dazzling morning light upon her and the obscurity of the cabin as background, stood a girl, tall, pale, with

a shimmer of golden-brown hair showing under a white leghorn hat, broad-brimmed against the sun. In his momentary impression of her, all the color of her face seemed to be concentrated in her lips, though these were not excessively red. But their beautiful yet generous modeling possessed the arresting quality of radiant greeting. Under one arm she pressed a dark green rug and a silken cushion. In her right she held a book. Her chiseled features gave a suggestion of fragility. A tinge of color now touched the white skin over her somewhat high cheek bones and she smiled faintly.

"Isn't my father here somewhere?" she inquired in a low contralto voice, that one felt should have proceeded from a more robust woman.

Roderic stood a moment speechless, suspended as it were in a great, a sudden silence, that had the quality of exaggerating every sound, the voice of the wind, the creaking of guy ropes and yardarms, the perpetual splashing of waves against the sides of the ship.

"Mr. Galbraith," she added, as though explaining to a child or a simpleton.

"Your father is forward — on the forepeak," rang out the sharp strident voice of Brandon, coming up briskly at that moment. "You'll find him sitting on an anchor, Miss Galbraith," he went on with a laugh. "May I take you to him?"

"Oh, no, thank you," she answered composedly. "That would be too windy for me. I'll sit here against the wall," and she moved to the right of the door and dropped her rug and cushion upon the deck.

"I'll get you a chair," cried Brandon with officious courtesy. "Whitford, come with me," he added sharply, and this command, no different from others of Brandon's, suddenly stung Roderic like the lash of a whip. Without replying, he turned quickly away from the ap-

parition of the girl and followed the mate abaft the cabin to the break in the poop.

Southward and ever southward drove the ship like a gigantic winged thing under favoring winds, with yards squared to one of those rarely fortunate slants that helped to make the famous records of clippers.

Toward the tropic and across it, and toward the line she sped; skirting the West Indies on the East, a terriffic white bird, her wings stretched to their utmost, the half-hourly clang of the bells alone sounding forth the intimation that it was human skill that drove her. A plop of rain would darken her sails, reduce their area for a time and make her body glisten wet for a space, but shortly the tropic sun and breeze would turn her dry and white again with a barb of flaky foam at her bows, an expanding furrow of rippling water in her wake, the while the taffrail log kept spinning out the generous sea miles.

"Two-eighty from noon to noon," Roderic would hear the skipper chuckle to old Galbraith exultantly. "Not bad, eh?"

"Better than dirty tramps can do," would respond Galbraith with an acid exhilaration.

Watch followed watch, day followed night, an occasional bit of reefing and hauling, a round of petty duties against a spread of vast emptiness, of unending monotony, that might have served the poet or thinker for speculations, beautiful or profound, gave that small world of seamen in which Roderic now lived no more than they seemed to demand of life, — food, time for sleep, for mending and washing grimy clothing, for endless chattering — ribald, foolish, childish, petulant — for smoking vile tobacco.

Roderic alone, perhaps, of all the crew, found his thought turning inward after the first turmoil of at-

tentive bewilderment had subsided into a little ordered knowledge. With the spokes of the wheel in his fingers on fair days, that potent circle seemingly in the center of his body as his shoulders topped it, something like a fantasy would come to him, floating cloudlike, that the wheel gripped in his hands was his own life. That he ruled and guided it with an unerring sureness now as never before, because now for the first time it had been delivered to him with a solemn injunction to falter not nor deviate. Against the breadth of the sea, under the brilliant slanting sun that made segments of rainbows in the dashes of spray over the weather bow, he seemed to himself to be towering over circumstances at last, as he towered over the binnacle, a match for all things because the very spokes of life had been put into his hands. The breeze droned on in the rigging, a pennon of blue smoke rolled to leeward from the galley, and on the main deck seamen were busy with ropes, sails, clothes, or palm and needle, sitting on a tarpaulined main hatch, or on the spare spars trimly lashed along the waterways, emitting little tenuous clouds of pipe smoke — magical moments these! Yet — on a sudden everything would seem wrong.

If he was truly endowed with this incontestable mastery over circumstances, why was he, Roderic Whitford, here on a windjammer bound for the antipodes? How had he come here? He belonged, not here, but — and again he was immersed in dreams. A stifling fragrance would suddenly come to him, the perfume of phlox mingled with a heavy scent of honeysuckle, the garden in which he had grown up, the overhanging, dripping mulberry tree, acluster with all his memories, the receding symbol of his exile. And then the girl Myrtle Thornley! That was why he was here. How insensate, how poignantly stupid! But now — now he knew.

Never could she do that again; not she, nor any one! He, it was, held the spokes now; he was in charge of the wheel. And after all, was it in reality the Thornley girl? Was it not something bigger and mightier, the irresistible urge for action, adventure, life? His chest would swell, his fingers grip the spokes more rigidly. No — no one but his own will could ever again drive him about.

From the cabin would emerge the two passengers, old Galbraith and his daughter. Her slender figure, as she clung to her father's arm, the blowing tendrils of her hair under the leghorn or the heather-blue tam-o'-shanter, a picture of beauty and strangely appealing fragility, would suddenly wipe out the images and symbols of home. Her laughter and quiet chatter as she looked up at her father in their walk seemed ineffably charming in those alien surroundings, holding the eye and ear, causing one's pulses to beat faster. Yet a wave of resentment would immediately submerge the throb of kindly feeling and admiration. Snobs! Of course they were snobs, he would mentally cry out with resentment. At home he was as good as anybody. But here, by an absurdly rigid convention that placed infinite barriers between officers, passengers and hands before the mast, he was like some pariah whose very existence must be ignored by those beings of the super-world. Stewarding for them! He, Roderic Whitford, because there was no steward in the crew, must wait upon the divinities at table to assist the cook and be ignored like a negro waiter! Anger shook him, the wheel quivered in his hands and a shower of spray flew up iridescent with rainbow colors.

"Think you can steer a ship now, eh?" The voice of Captain Flitch, in the soft growl he affected, came upon his ear suddenly on one such afternoon like a murmur from the breeze. Roderic, like a dreamer awak-

ened abruptly, turned guiltily, losing a spoke to his mortification.

"Trying to, sir," was all he could find wit enough to reply, hastily correcting his error.

"You haven't seen weather yet, my lad," the skipper scrutinized the compass severely, lest the crew should think him gossiping with a sailor. "Wait," he said, turning to Roderic sharply, as though uttering a reprimand, "wait till we strike a gale."

Roderic, uncertain, alert, painfully anxious to comprehend, gazed for a moment into those shrewdly twinkling eyes. No! There was no reprimand in those eyes. It was a piece of kindly condescension on the part of the master to this strayed puppy in his fold. On a sudden the boy was overflowing with gratitude, a magazine of questions that the captain could resolve for him, if only he could stay long enough on this sudden level of human equality, at least of human relationship, to which the little skipper had raised him.

"I wish I knew about navigation," he blurted out eagerly, before he could marshal any other words, almost before he could think. It was the resentment at his own futility that had unconsciously burst forth into expression, the desire to transcend in a bound so many grades of inferiority that confined him in this strange world into which mysterious forces had catapulted him. In the same instant he flushed to his ears, abruptly aware of his presumption.

"Navigation," the captain repeated, moodily looking away toward the forepeak. "Ye-es, there are books in the cabin. You are smart, you Yankees. Men have been mates — commanded ships at your age — not enough experience, though," he trailed off into his soft murmuring growl, for at that moment Galbraith and his daughter were coming toward them, and with his

pudgy thumb and a broad grin, the little mariner, like a figure in a humorous sea story, beckoned them to come up on the poop.

"Books in the cabin," he repeated, muttering over his shoulder as the father and daughter began to ascend the ladder, "but learn to steer a vessel first, and to lay out on a yard," he added with a laugh, precisely at the instant when Miss Galbraith's head appeared above the ladder. Roderic could have bitten his tongue out for having spoken at all, despite the kindness that had gone before, only to receive this final sting of humiliation within earshot of the girl. He glued his eyes to the binnacle without a glance at the others as they came up and moved to leeward of him with Flitch.

"This will be great weather on your island," he heard the captain remark jocundly. "Picnic weather for the land crabs."

"Always great weather there," Galbraith answered testily. "When d'ye think ye'll make Papeete, Captain?"

"You know as much as I do about that," the skipper laughed as at a witticism, out of sheer exhuberance of spirit. "Wait till we've passed fifty south in the Pacific, then I might try to guess for you. But what d'you want?" he ran on with boisterous jocularity. "Look at Miss Allene's cheeks — getting color in 'em, eh? Color in 'em. Look!" and again he used that thumb of his with irresistibly comic effect to point out the color in the girl's cheeks. "Tropic island flowers don't thrive in gray walls. Need the warm breezes, eh?"

It was then that Roderic could not forbear looking up and his glance encountered the shy violet-gray eyes of the girl like two still deep pools of light irradiated by a faint smile. Instantly his own eyes fastened again upon the compass. The little thrill that shot through him he stifled in a bitter resentment.

"God!" he thought, as he wielded the spokes with angry energy. "I'll be glad when those fools get off at Papeete — why don't we get to Papeete and be rid of that outfit — *damn* them!"

CHAPTER V

RANZO

The novelty of sailing on a windjammer may fade to a passenger in the long days that follow one another in seemingly unending monotony. But to an embryo sailor like Roderic Whitford there was the constant excitement of learning, as thrilling as the young child's passage from creeping to walking. He was alert and eager, and by the time the line was crossed and the ship was running down the southeast Trades off the coast of South America, with the Southern Cross gleaming nightly nearer, there was little difference between him and the rest of the crew in matters of duty.

"Reefing and pawling is nothin'," old Carmichael once philosophically observed. "Any fool can learn that in a week. A man's a sailor or he ain't a sailor by the guts that's in his gizzard — and that's all." By which he intended to convey that Roderic's address to his task was a certain indication of orthodox contents in his interior.

There was no romance about the voyage to Carmichael or the crew in general. Their livelihood had put them on the *Alice* as it might have brought them to any one of score of ships. Captain Flitch was bent primarily upon taking his eight-hundred-ton topsail schooner, the purchase of which represented the crowning of a lifetime, from the States to his home waters and his own designs in the South Pacific. The chance meeting of old Galbraith and his daughter, upon their arrival in Boston

from Glasgow, with the exuberant Captain Flitch, was alone responsible for the presence of the two passengers on the *Alice*.

Gossip in the forecastle, to which a village grocer's shop is a tower of silence, spun fantastic yarns concerning the Galbraiths. Olsen, a Swede, declared he had it from the second mate that Galbraith was a king on a cannibal island. Ribald retorts informed him what the second mate would do before choosing him as a receptacle of information. Davidson, the Nova Scotian carpenter, for some reason known as the Beaver, endlessly playing solitaire on his sea-chest when off duty, broke his silence long enough one day to inform them that if they craved to know the truth about the Galbraiths, they had better ask him. A shower of queries, injunctions and interjections greeted this remark.

"Out with it, old slats!" "Spill it, Davey!" "Spit it out, old Beaver!" "We bite — let's hear it!"

"Well, he ain't no more a king than what you be," retorted Davidson, slowly fingering his cards and spitting a red jet into the sandbox at his end of the forecastle. "He's nothin' more than a copra planter."

"How d'you know?" shouted Billy of Bangor.

"Cause the young lady, she told me when I was fixin' her door latch — smart Alec. See?"

"Ole Beaver's movin' into bleddy 'igh sassiety, s'elp me," cried Hornblow, a Liverpool ex-stoker, whose memories of hula dancers and moonlit beaches were driving him back into the Pacific, even on a windjammer. His powerful bare arms were covered with a network of chromatic tatooing, and his beady green eyes were dancing. He dared not make any ribald remarks about the only woman on board, having early discovered that the more decent members of the crew would not tolerate it, —

a packet rat, if ever one there was. "An' w'ere is this 'ere bleedin' island, Beaver?" he crowed.

"I don't rightly know," replied the carpenter soberly. Sobriety seemed the tacitly agreed-upon style with which Hornblow's speeches were met. He turned too easily vile. "But 'taint far from Tahiti, I'm certain sure, for Papeete's their port."

"Crikey! Pinch me, some wan!" Hornblow cried in an ecstasy, jumping from his bunk. "Does this hooker put in at Papeete? Do I see them again, dancin' the hula?" And a stream of ecstatic profanity shot out of him in sheer exultation. "Oh, hallelujah!" he maundered on. "What d'you bleedin' lubbers know of the beach?" and he trailed off into chuckling inarticulateness, the scar of steam on his face that ran from his left temple to beneath the chin turning a livid red and giving his face a gruesome twist.

Roderic, who had contributed nothing to this conversation, received the intelligence with perhaps more interest than any one. So it was certain the passengers would debark in mid-Pacific? Well, he for one was glad of it. A nuisance, that was all they were, — the grim old man and that — that fussy girl on board. He packed a pipeful of plug and went out on deck to smoke by the foremast. The fair breeze to which the ship was heeling that tranquil Sunday afternoon seemed to sweep all the childish babble of the forecastle out of his head. What had he to do with all that? The world seemed suddenly rich with endless though distant possibility. Passengers! What had he to do with the passengers? What did they matter to him? His life was in his own hands at last.

Allene Galbraith and her father were just disappearing aft into the cabin companionway, and strangely enough Roderic experienced a pang of nameless regret that the nuisance of the ship should pass out of view

precisely as he had caught sight of her. Softly he swore at himself for his folly. Why should he care? Of what conceivable interest to him were either father or daughter? Another Myrtle Thornley? Girls were all alike. He knew them now, knew them for what they were. And he bit savagely into the stem of his pipe.

One additional gleam of information concerning the Galbraiths came to him soon after that Sunday afternoon. It was at a change of watches when he came to relieve the wheel, that he overheard a fragment of colloquy between Brandon and the skipper, touching their island home.

"It must be very small," the captain was saying, holding to a stanchion, "smaller than Victoria Island, almost like those reefs that are marked upon the chart E D — existence doubtful. Victoria — it's about 161 degrees south 8 — is still marked as Dudosa, or Doubtful Island. I've been there, I'm sorry to say — a beast of a spot. I'll tell you about it some time."

"But I thought these people were near Tahiti?" put in Brandon, with questing eyes.

"No — not exactly," said the captain. "They are somewhere east by north of the Paumotus. A soft thing, I shouldn't wonder," he trailed off, growling speculatively, "since the old boy is so careful not to state his position. Has a forty-ton schooner of his own there. A little copra, a little shell, and between the two he makes his living — and a bit besides, eh? Well, that's one way of living for a retired skipper; I don't grudge it him!" and he laughed jovially and descended the ladder cabinwards. And for some time afterward, though the ship was heeling to the staysails, with a very considerable white bone in her mouth, as the crew put it, the mate Brandon in the chart room was poring over Pacific charts

and sailing directories, with what satisfaction he alone knew.

Through fair weather and gusts of foul the ship drove forward, and the hands that manned her were kept at their constant routine of avoiding idleness. There was holystoning and bracing, staying and easing, scraping and painting, rattling down rigging, with little time for leisure and that little precious. Roderic could now swarm up the shrouds with any of them, lay out on a yard, and pass a gasket round a sail without disgrace. He knew the dangerous exhilaration of swinging on a footrope high in the air, clinging for dear life and yet working with a will simultaneously. He still stumbled at times over the high coaming of the forecastle deckhouse, to the constant amusement of his mates, to whom the low thresholds of shore life were things almost forgotten. It was one such stupid accident that cost him a twisted ankle and the sight of Pernambuco, when the ship put in for water and fresh provisions before she tackled Cape Stiff. He had to lie up for four days. When he came on duty again, the very memory of land seemed like an ancient fable.

On raced the *Alice* toward the hectic gales off the River Plate, to the cold winds that blew off the Pampas and the first icy blasts with moist snow that brought Antarctic intimations of the Horn. Roderic was compelled to draw warm, ill-fitting clothing from the lazaret against his pay, and the dreary rounding of the Horn began. Twenty-four days of evil weather, snowy decks, icy ropes and frozen sails, that numbed your fishhooks past the hope of thawing, that chilled the marrow in the bones, that made the thought of warmth and comfort a ridiculous, a dissolving dream, that brought grave anxiety to every eye on board. Yet no more actual danger had threatened

the *Alice* than had threatened thousands of other ships under those angry heavens. Captain Flitch found much exultation in the thought, despite his exhausting days and nights on deck, that he had made the run from the Falklands to 50 degrees south, in seven days to the hour, "clipper time," as he explained. Patches of clear sky broke through at intervals, the glitter of the Southern Cross fitfully rained down its majestic influence to the joy of straining hearts and the Magellan clouds shot hopeful messages to anxious eyes. Once in the Pacific all hands were now glad of the Galbraiths' presence aboard. For the Galbraiths it was who compelled the ship, under topsails again, to head northwest toward the warm tropic and the elysian Society Islands, instead of almost due west, barely above the limit of drift ice, toward Fiji.

"Cripes! The *hula!*" Hornblow, the Liverpool ex-stoker, would exclaim, sucking in his breath when snow was still powdering his sou'-wester. "The brown girls, the *vahines* — the good French rum and cognac!"

"She's still a long way from all them," some one would remind him.

"Yep, but she's headin' nor'west now, ye —— wet blanket — nor'west, toward the cocoanuts, ye bleever! G' on now, skate along there, old girl!" he would apostrophize the ship. "Skate along, ye beauty, ye little ——" and he would lose himself in a shower of vile affectionate epithets at the ship, that was bearing him to his heart's desire.

Fair winds and bright sunshine came to them gradually and became virtually constant as the ship, like a creature triumphant over crises and circumstances, swam out of the memory of the Horn, with magnificent daily runs, and headed toward Capricorn over the fortieth parallel.

"I am beginning to smell them palm trees now," Horn-

blow would ecstatically hug himself, and all the ship's company seemed preternaturally cheerful as though riding, observed Billy of Bangor, upon a Sunday-school picnic. The breezes purred in the rigging, bursts of song were frequent about the forecastle coamings and, because Roderic had taken the captain at his word, borrowed some books on navigation from the cabin and was secretly conning them, his shipmates in the midst of roistering laughter, that made even the Finns grin, gave him a rousing version of Reuben Ranzo, a ditty almost forgotten on the face of the seas. Billy of Bangor, perhaps a trifle jealous, began the chanty that his grandfather, an old California clipper sailor, had taught him on a Maine farm. The burden of it was that —

Oh, Ranzo was no sailor
Ranzo boys, O Ranzo. . . .
. . . . . .
But the captain, he being a good man,
Ranzo boys, O Ranzo,
He took him in the cabin,
Ranzo boys, O Ranzo,
And he gave him wine and whiskey,
Ranzo boys, O Ranzo.
And he learned him navigation,
Ranzo boys, O Ranzo.
And now he's Captain Ranzo,
Ranzo boys, O Ra-a-an-zo-o!

Hornblow emitted a wild screech after every final Ranzo, and Roderic could now laugh at his own expense and join in the singing.

No one eternally cabined in houses, or endlessly moving in streets, can come within leagues of apprehending the nearness to heaven of those on board a vessel long traversing vast and sunlit seas. Sunlight and starlight, as they pour down ceaselessly, become mysteriously

dynamic, potently alive, and the Biblical fable of a man being bodily taken up into the empyrean dawns at moments like an unexpected landfall into astounding reality.

The thought of "home" still visited Roderic at intervals, and he knew he was certain to return to that home at the end of his voyage. Glimmering dimly in the depth of his consciousness, however, was the obscure knowledge that his breaking away from the home and the garden where he had been reared was at least an escape from an old self into a new one. And realization instinctively came to him during those vast open days between sea and sky that henceforth, for good or ill, wherever he might be, this new self was alone on the bosom of the universe. A thrilling novel sense of self-reliance was being born into his spirit.

"You're a sailor now, lad," Carmichael had told him, when they had rounded the Horn. "I've seen 'em come, and I've seen 'em go. An' it's Cape Stiff that tells the story." But a vague hope was beating in Roderic's heart that he was more than that now, — that he was a man.

The glittering days that followed brought the passengers much upon the deck, after their long seclusion round the Horn. Roderic could not help gazing at Allene Galbraith whenever opportunity offered and yet somehow bearing her a nameless resentment for her presence there. Her eyes, her hair, her mantling color, her very clothes were indescribably fascinating to him, yet he kept turning from her with a somber perplexity, like a child troubled as to why the forbidden should so constantly lure him. Senseless irritation against her smoldered fitfully in his heart. Was the outgrown boyishness still stirring in the heart of the man? Well, a few days more and the ship would be rid of her for good. And, after all, their ways lay infinitely wide apart.

Nevertheless, during his long silent watches on deck, he would find himself in the midst of imaginary conversations with her, pointed, bitter, dignified, and always these colloquies ended with something sharp and acid that tripped from his tongue with quiet fury, once for all nailing her to silence. One day his opportunity came. Beating against the southeast Trades, the *Alice* was now heading toward the islanded portion of the Pacific above the tropic, that to the Galbraiths spelled home. From her deck chair by the companionway, as with averted eyes Roderic was passing her, seemingly unconscious of her presence, the girl, with a petrifying suddenness, spoke to him.

"Whitford," she called softly, and he stood for an instant incredulous. Then his heart bounded and began to throb like the head pumps. He turned his gaze upon her without replying; tendrils of her shining hair were blowing about her face; she seemed to radiate an incredible beauty.

"Wouldn't you like to have some of these books?" she began and hesitated, the color in her face slowly deepening.

"Books!" he repeated in a startled bewilderment.

"I have so many, you see," she sat up from the cushions and spoke rapidly to conceal her own confusion. "I have read them all, and we're nearly home. It will save my packing them again and carrying them. I thought, perhaps — if you would like some of them — or perhaps the others ——"

Then the smoldering demon of the imaginary conversation blazed forth in him. "Whitford!" it flashed through his brain. "Not even a mister to a stranger — does she imagine she's slumming?"

"No, thanks," he answered her coldly, icily. "I have no time to read fiction. I know nothing about the others."

It is many years since that day and the world has lived an age, but I see him still and feel the writhing of shame at his own irresistible boorishness; but to save his soul he could not at that instant, for all his new manhood, overcome that burst of stupid and cruel young egotism. And without looking at her again, he strode off upon his errand.

A momentary flame of exultation leaped up in his heart. "That ought to settle her!" repeated itself again and again in silent speech within the dark corners of his resentment, and he stumbled twice over trivial obstacles. Once back at the forepeak whence he had come, a sudden dragging misery swept through him like a swirl of bilge water. Why had he done it? How could he? She had called him Whitford — but was he not a sailor? She ought to know better. But to single him out for titles and distinction, would not that have been worse? She ought — she ought —— Yet it was him she had singled out. And the black despair following upon stupidity, more poignant than the barb of any misfortune, shook him suddenly like an ague. He had been hideously, intolerably stupid — he, a Man? — and she, a wonderful girl, beautiful and kind as they make them. Oh, damn it all! And he sank into a stupor of bitterness that darkened the most radiant day he had yet seen in the luminous Pacific. With savage fury that yet seemed false and hollow, he pictured the relief when once the ship was rid of her.

To arrest the course of events, to retrace a step once taken, to cry back, — the impossibility of that is one of the most ancient of all the lessons that man has failed to learn. In reckless, youthful prodigality he would have given years of his life to undo what he had done, to have once again the opportunity of speaking to her, to let his utmost soul look into her friendly eyes, to speak

to this generous though disturbing girl with abject humility, to efface his corroding rudeness. The gibes of those of the crew who had seen her speak to him passed almost unheard through his brain, aching with futile plans and problems. Not again came the opportunity, nor was it likely to come. For whenever he saw her thereafter, either the mate Brandon was attentively near, or else her father, or she was absorbed in reading. So far as her eyes were concerned, seaman Roderic Whitford no longer existed.

Days grew shorter as they were growing longer. Islands were now being passed, to the keen-edged excitement of all on board; fragrances came drifting toward the ship and aquatic birds, the gulls, the flying bosuns, hovered joyfully about the rigging. Great luscious moons overhung the nights and the days were aflood with a sunlight so dazzling, so intoxicating, that the sailors could hardly believe duty was expected of them, though they went about it like creatures charged with fires in their veins.

It was at dawn one day, when Roderic was on deck, that landfall was cried and the white band of distant breakers on the barrier reef brought the captain in his pyjamas upon deck. As the island lifted from the sparkling sea, a mass of verdure from the depths of blue, towering to a peak beneath the clouds, it suddenly produced to Roderic's eyes the strange illusion of some gigantic flower hanging chalice downward from the skies. The fringe of feathery cocoa palms that for some mysterious reason always tender welcome to man's eyes, as though bringing back primeval memories of the cradle days of his race, inclined their friendly heads toward the distant ship in invitation.

Now began the intoxicating business of beating about for the break in the reef which is the harbor of Papeete,

and every hour brought new beauties to sun-dazzled eyes. A blur of light, a blue lagoon, gleaming white walls and red roofs, the rattling rush of anchor chains, a swarm of canoes and boats with joyous bronzelike natives, shouting, laughing, bearing all the fruits of the tropics, and the *Alice,* her long voyage nearly over, was riding in the harbor of Papeete.

No human being from the chilling northern zones can come for the first time to a tropic land without experiencing the shock of regret that must have fallen upon Adam on expulsion from the Garden of Delight. The cosmic freshness of tropical verdure and landscape, the fragrant luxuriant innocence, the Edenlike abundance, reminds one too poignantly of the price that is paid in care and melancholy for triumphing over cold and frost and snow in higher latitudes. A hidden neglected shutter of the mind leaps open and ancient gayeties, primal satisfactions, a forgotten laughing joyousness is revealed to one's soul, never more to be forgotten, always thenceforth to be yearned after. The rustling plumelike palms welcome the newcomer softly back to Eden whence an inscrutable Deity had once expelled the race. It was so the little shutter clicked in Roderic's brain, and for a space the heady, kindly tumult of that blue lagoon, of that dazzling sunlight and glistening verdure suffused his brain like a sparkling wine. A hubbub, a fabulous fullness of joy, as though all nature were softly laughing, surrounded and permeated the far-traveled ship, so that even Brandon, alert and magisterial at the gangway, seemed glad under protest, reluctantly benignant.

Port formalities were quickly over, shot through with gestures, smiles and French uniforms. The passengers were landing. They were going ashore. This joyous world was swallowing them up. The girl, Allene Galbraith, was being absorbed as of right into this

wondrously happy world where she incontestably belonged. His eyes, now miserably unrestrained, kept roving in her direction.

On a sudden his heart gave a bound. For as she bent downward over a piece of her luggage, a swift strange glance from her soft eyes, a glance at once puzzled, searching and kindly, momentarily overtook his own and they hung together for an instant. The cord, silken and gossamerlike, that had vibrated between them, how imperceptibly soever, in the tiny world of the ship, suddenly tautened with an inexplicable tractile strength and gave a tug at his heart like a cable.

The lustrous world abruptly lost much of its light. Would he ever see her again? Allene suddenly straightened up, and the face and form of her stood silhouetted against the dazzling deck in an aura of beauty so alluring and imperishable that all the barriers fallen away in that single glance between them rose again to put miles of distance between her and himself. An overwhelming longing suddenly showed him a vision of himself standing eagerly before her, in friendly colloquy, all his brusque rudeness to her magically cleared away, and she laughing in gentle forgiveness.

"To the Tiare — the Tiare Hotel," he heard some one utter as from a void, and she was going — leaving the ship! A dull weight of profound regret swept over him, a wave of bereavement. The light and the glory were suddenly departing. Cold drops of perspiration beaded his forehead under that tropic sun.

"Look at that young woman!" crowed Captain Flitch, bustling up with outward turned thumb, pointing at the girl's exquisite coloring. "Make her second mate next time she sails in this ship. Knock the men about — she would."

"Stiff voyage, Captain," chuckled Galbraith; "stiff voyage but paid dividends, that did."

They were leaving. He would never see her again!

"What's the matter, Ranzo?" demanded Billy of Bangor. "You look half-shot. 'S that what the sight of the brown girls in the canoes 's done to you already? You wait till you go ashore!"

Roderic awoke as from some incredible trance. "Ain't you glad those folks are off," Billy pursued, "so we can get some shore leave?"

"You bet!" he answered absently with the manner and language Billy best understood.

And he emphasized the exuberance of his enthusiasm with a twisted smile.

PART II

A NEW WORLD

CHAPTER VI

THE SEARCH

A few months in the Pacific had made a vast difference in Roderic.

I see him now, wandering about the waterfront of Suva with its barefoot savage-looking Fijian policemen; in the streets of Auckland and Sydney, with their strangely familiar, American-like civilization in the remote antipodes; observant, curious, the same Roderic, yet infinitely different. His mind at this time was a shining proof to those who maintain that evolution proceeds by leaps as well as by slow infinitesimal changes.

The vast unexplored world that had been a beckoning, a luring mystery to the boy, was now a somewhat battered, matter-of-fact familiar. Not precisely familiar in the sense that it is to those prosaic seamen who begin yarns with, "I think it was in Shanghai one day," or "I saw that fellow first on the Bund at Yokohama." But Roderic had made that early discovery of traveled men: that the world, at its farthest, consists of people with a human nature singularly akin to his own, that they proceed to adapt themselves, to build and to organize their life in very much the same manner throughout the globe.

He had learned to think of himself, in those remote places, without the little thin cloak of self-pity that remains to some of us from childhood; to laugh at himself wherever the vestigial reflection occurred to him: "It is I, alone in this distant spot!" He was a man among men, a sailor and self-reliant. He knew how to take care of himself. He cared little for drinking and shrank instinctively from the sailors' promiscuous philandering with native and other women at the seaports. He had fought a fist fight with Hornblow before the Pier Hotel at Suva, because he would not drink with the Liverpool ex-stoker and had come off with a black eye and a night in the calaboose, to which both combatants had been haled by those club-armed ferocious Fijian policemen. "Life is life," he might have safely observed and felt that this platitude represented his own profound discovery, his innermost conviction. Platitudes are a stage in the mind's evolution.

He had had plans, hazy yet sunlit plans of stirring adventurous youth, to visit every spot of importance in this portion of the globe. Sailors at the bars and in the waterfront eating houses made tantalizing allusions to the China coast, to Kow-Lung and Canton, to Japan, to Singapore and the Straits, to names familiar to those seas, to Rodrigues of Macao, to Shiney Smith of Amoy, to Levy the pearl buyer, — and Roderic was filled with desire to drink up that knowledge and to return home a completely traveled man.

But one day, at Sydney, just as he had decided to ship for Hong Kong and the coast, a sudden vision reeled into his brain unbidden, a vision of the quiet lamplit home he had left, of the garden and the flowers, the hedge and the drooping mulberry, a broad demesne redolent of phlox and honeysuckle, rich in midsummer drip and shade, a picture of cool tranquil perfection, a haven of

such beauty that it clamped his heart like a sudden magnetic current. For an instant, with a throb of triumph, he saw also the girl Myrtle Thornley, with her mocking eyes, informing him that he was not a man! The momentary sense of superiority, however, was wiped out by the wave of nostalgia that swept him in the wake of that vision of home. He must go back, go back now — at once — as fast as a ship could take him.

There was a steamer for San Francisco, a tramp steamer that was sailing in a few days. He might have to shovel coal throughout a Pacific voyage, under equatorial heat, but no matter. He must seek a berth aboard her; he must go home. The world of the Orient, with its strange names and beckoning ports, suddenly loomed harsh and thin and empty against the warm substantial reality of home.

It was an early June day in Sydney, cold and blustery, when Roderic, now driven by this quest for a homeward berth, and hurrying along the waterfront, heard behind him the doggerel,

> "Oh, Ranzo was no sailor,
> Ranzo boys, O Ranzo
> So they shipped him aboard a whaler,
> Ranzo boys, O Ranzo. . . ."

The voice also was familiar. He wheeled about and beheld the grinning countenance of Billy of Bangor.

"Hello, Ranzo," shouted Billy, with a wave. "I thought I recognized your stern. Where you plowing to, eh?"

"Going to find the ship that'll take me home," Roderic informed him, seizing his great paw. "I must get back to the States."

"What is she — steamer?"

"Yes — have to get some speed on. Fooling around here too long."

"Oh, Ranzo!" expostulated Billy in derision. "Like to shovel coal in hell, d'you?"

"Can't be helped," said Roderic laconically. "It's quick, anyway." Yes, it was quick! And the past ten months with their crowded richness of a lifetime's experience suddenly seemed thin and tawdry, — a ragged shadow.

"Why don't you go home like a gentlemen," pursued Billy, "on a real ship that's clean, with a breeze always blowing through your whiskers — a ship like the *Alice?*"

"No," Roderic told him positively. "I want speed. I'm going home." Speed, his national fever, was in his blood.

"Oh, hell!" cried Billy in disgust. "Some skirt waitin' for you, I guess. 'Taint in reason to pass up the *Alice* and our Old Man Flitch, — he's a bird. An' I'm his second mate now, I'll have you to know, Captain Ranzo. Come on, old stick-in-the-mud," he urged paradoxically upon this seeker after speed. "Ship with us, stop at Papeete, have a glass o' beer at Louis', see the *vahines,* dance — what's your sweat? Lots of time!"

Then suddenly, in a quiver of light on the bright deck before him, was standing Allene Galbraith. She was bending forward and, from under her long dark eyelashes, her singular glance, puzzled and searching and kindly, came to him, not momentary now, but persistent and haunting, fixed in space, absolute, permanent as by some magical process, so that he could not dispel it. Papeete! That was where he had last seen her!

"When," he finally asked, as one emerging from a dream, after a long pause, "when does the *Alice* sail?"

"Ah, the beer and the *vahines* got you, old Ranzo! She sails in about four days," he added more soberly.

"She's waitin' for a load of rabbit skins. Like rabbit skins, Ranzo? Come on back with me and sign up," prompted Billy.

"Might as well," murmured Roderic indifferently, "specially as I stand in with the second mate, who'll make the Kanakas do all the work." He was hardly aware what he was saying, for the persistent image of the Papeete lagoon clung to his mind ineluctably.

"You watch!" cried Billy in triumphant importance. "You'll be a real sailor if you sail with me — and the Old Man," he added conscientiously. "Do you know that old boy's record? Smart he is, smart as paint. Comes from somewhere in England, Essex or Skeezix or somewhere. Was a country haggler — a kind of peddler, I guess — then went off with a small circus in South America. He was everything in that circus, manager, foreman, press agent, side show, the clown, the elephant, and maybe the tent. But in his trips with the circus in small boats, the sea got him. When this old one-horse circus broke up at Rio, he shipped before the mast on an old hooker beatin' round the Horn. Now look where he is! His own schooner, dandy home at Suva — got a daughter pretty's a little red wagon. I'm for her — that little gal; stick to old Flitch, I say — a good skipper!"

Roderic heard this recital, unusually serious for Billy, with that impersonal counterfeit attention that is centered on its own thought. But his thought was nothing more than a picture, a brilliant vision under a dazzling sun on the Papeete lagoon, a girl whose eyes were questioning why he had been a boor and a pig to her on the voyage westward. Accompanying the vision was a sound in his ears that might have been the distant roar of the surf on the barrier reef or the throbbing of his own

blood. He could not tell. Papeete was suddenly become an objective, a quest, and a goal, the only goal.

Billy's rapid narration having come to a full stop, Roderic, with a sudden start, to prove that he had been listening, demanded:

"How long do we stop at Papeete?"

"Oh, a few days. The old man buys up little lots of vanilla beans, bits of copra from the Chinamen and carries it to 'Frisco on his own. Trust the skipper to look out for his end," he crowed with shrewd delight.

"A few days in Papeete," Roderic said to himself. And his previous indifference was turned to a fever of desire to be aboard the *Alice*, to make sail, to cut the blue Pacific for the harbor of Papeete.

When once the *Alice* lay anchored in view of the gleaming coral mole in the harbor of Papeete, waiting for her vanilla beans, a queen among the trading schooners that surrounded her, all pointing adventurously seaward, Roderic learned in all its plenitude the bitter disenchantment that follows on attainment. He had craved to be at Papeete. He was at Papeete. What, he asked himself dumbly, had he hoped for? Had he expected to meet Allene Galbraith on the quays or in the streets, and gallantly, like another Raleigh, cast his cloak before her feet and be suddenly lifted to her intimacy? He might as well have counted upon meeting with Queen Elizabeth. The last of those glowing impossible illusions of adolescence, that are said never wholly to leave a man, dropped away heavily from Roderic as he wandered about the winding streets of the embowered little city in the Pacific.

The shops and the coffee houses, the warehouses, the restaurants told him no more than might have those of Boston. The red and gray roofs peering from a green

world of foliage, with a wall of mountains as an overhanging background, told of nothing but blank strangeness. The tree-lined lanes, the brilliant flamboyants, the golden-hued Allamandas, the princely breadfruit trees with leaves actually shaped like an open-fingered hand — reserving nothing — the gigantic creepers in a riot of competition upon walls and roofs and trellises confided no more than their robust irresistible fecundity. Hedges of mock coffee along gardens were piteously reminiscent of Adam's Rock and the drooping pandanus oddly recalled the mulberry at home. And therein, in that word home, lay all the cue.

Could older men be so foolish, he asked himself, to go seeking for a will-o'-the-wisp? The belief in the wisdom of the elders is a weed, that, despite the cynics, dies hard in the breast of youth. If only the elders had the wisdom and the skill to utilize that belief! Even a discreet inquiry or two revealed nothing, absolutely nothing, of the Galbraiths. No one whom he asked had ever heard of the name, and those who might have known, merchants and the like, he dared not ask. He was a common sailor before the mast.

The Galbraiths' island, he told himself, might be near at hand, or hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles away. The Pacific was broad and now seemed to him limitless. Then on a sudden, when he had given up the search, and the *Alice* was all but ready for sea, inspiration came to him. With true Yankee ingenuity he hit upon a plan that ought to lead to certain knowledge. The British Consul! He would certainly know of any British inhabitant as prominent as the chief occupant of an island in the region. His shore leave was over, but with a last despairing effort, in abashed eagerness, he hastened to the British consulate to make his tremendous inquiry. Supposing his quest were rewarded, he asked himself, supposing

he learned the whereabouts of the Galbraiths — what could he do about it? Desert the ship at the last moment and turn beach comber? He might return on another voyage — Captain Flitch might let him off — a farrago of tumultuous, impossibilities raced through his brain, but they failed to halt his steps toward the British consulate. Finally, with a palpitating heart, he stood before the door, the British shield forbiddingly prominent to his eyes. With a racing mind he was endeavoring to frame his query in words. Suddenly the door opened. From its darkling precincts, bustling with papers in his hands, emerged the rubicund, jocund figure of Captain Flitch.

"What, lad!" he cried exuberantly expostulant. "Still here? Man alive, we sail with the tide! Who gave you leave? Come along, my lad, and be quick about it; do! Here, I say," he added as an after-thought, sharply. "Here is twenty francs — run ahead and get the latest American reading stuff you can get for the money — weeklies, story papers, — you know the kind — and be quick about it, boy — run!"

Thus, with the sound of doom echoing through his brain, with the sense of irreparable finality that only the inexperienced in Fate know, Roderic's quest in Papeete was ended.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORM

"Homeward bound!" cried Billy of Bangor as the *Alice* was heading eastward through the innumerable islands and atolls of the Low Archipelago. "Is there anything to beat those two words — or this little boat?" In the pride of his dignity as second mate, Billy was not ostentatious in his conversations with a seaman before the mast. But, after all, Roderic had been a sort of pal of his and Bangor was not so far removed from Adams Rock.

"Did you ever see anything the way the old man works through these shoals and atolls? This is right where he lives — knows every one of these little sand heaps the way you might know Nantasket or Mother Carey's Chickens. We'll cross the line at about 120 degrees and then for Acapulco and 'Frisco!"

"Acapulco!" exclaimed Roderic in surprised disgust. "Where the devil's that — and why do we go there?"

"Oh, that's Mexico," with off-hand ease. "Old Man's got some cargo for the place. But then it's right up the coast for 'Frisco. Won't take us much out of the way — except for these measly islands right here. If only we don't stick in the doldrums north of the line."

"You swindler!" cried Roderic, laughing ruefully. "And here I shipped on this hooker because she was going straight home!"

"Didn't know it myself till we got to Papeete," Billy grinned defensively. "Our real boss is Mr. Cargo, as

you'll find, young feller," and he added some trifling order for Roderic to execute, to cover his lapse into sheer sociability, now he was a mate.

The crew was now mostly Kanaka. Old Carmichael was still on board and so were the cook and the carpenter. The forecastle deckhouse was almost empty, only one side of it being occupied. All the white men of whatever watch berthed together on the port side of the bulkhead out of a gregarious instinct that drove them together. The Kanakas slept on mats upon the deck between the forepeak and foremast, like dogs, the white men said, because the brown men preferred fresh air to fetid.

It was early morning, and the Kanakas off watch were eating their breakfast, still largely consisting of *feis,* cocoanuts and breadfruit while they lasted, out of a single mess kit, which was a huge wooden bowl. The faint aroma of coffee came to Roderic's nostrils as he passed the squatting group, cheerful and laughing, vocal in their babbling tongue that seemed all lisping and vowels to his ear. He grinned at their greeting, conscientiously American, of "Hello!" and gave them back *Yoranna,* whereat they laughed.

When he reëmerged from the forepeak hold, they were no longer laughing. They were all on their feet, sniffing the air and looking up to the hazy heavens. The light breeze that had been barely filling the sails, had died to an intense lifelessness, a pallid silence, broken only by the sounds of swinging hooks and gaffs. They stared at him dully as he came toward them and shook their heads.

"No good," one of them, a giant of over six feet four, informed Roderic with melancholy liquid eyes, like a troubled spaniel.

"A calm," murmured Roderic and glancing over the rail he saw the ship barely gliding through an oily sea,

her remaining impetus alone giving her steerage way. There was not a ripple at the bows.

"Looka!" the giant Kanaka pointed eastward. In the distance a heavy bank of clouds was massively covering the horizon. With a great rush as of invisible wings it was coming up, a monster bent on devouring the sky.

In an instant all was confusion. The Kanakas had abandoned their breakfast half-eaten. Billy came running forward, shouting for all hands; the new first mate was on deck giving orders, and the captain in his pyjamas at the cabin hatchway, still unshaven, was muttering something to the effect that the barometer had gone dotty. The sense of impending calamity, like a palpable being, seemed to have taken possession of the ship.

Kanakas and white men alike were soon swarming at the rigging, hauling, clewing up, making fast the staysails, topsails, and jibs. The sickly-colored air gave no life to these efforts; one seemed to be pulling at weights without leverage, and the Kanakas, chattering in undertones as they worked, added to the eerie effect of ominous foreboding.

"Prenty rain," muttered the big Kanaka working beside Roderic on the flying jibboom, "Prenty wind come — hurricane."

"It's only a calm," Roderic murmured lightly, by way of reassuring himself, as he was passing the gaskets round the canvas.

"Him hurricane," declared the Kanaka firmly, his eyes glittering into the white man's for an instant, as though expecting to find — yet hoping not to find — fear in them.

Memory is a tricky witness to a capital crisis in the life of a man. It throws up, when pressed, a scattered mass of trifling detail, a looming event here and there, a sequence broken by blurs, confusions, and darknesses. Ac-

curacy in recollection, at no time more necessary, is at no time less certain.

The captain disappeared into the cabin and very soon returned dressed and in his full squat dignity, with a masterful cheerfulness. The tension became relaxed. He could not bear to have his ship, the pride of his life, merely rolling about. He sniffed every side for wind. He thumbed his Pacific directory in the chart room; he came out and peered into the heavens. The "old man" knew his Pacific and he would get all he could out of his ship before the trouble came.

"Put the topsails on her," he ordered the mate sharply. The topsails gave the ship but little energy in her gasping languor. The men kept gazing about with a suppressed anxiety, as though in constant expectation of some dread messenger from heaven with a tragic message. Presently the first whitecaps came rolling toward the ship from the northeast and all eyes were unobstrusively yet tensely turned upon them, as though the dread message were at hand.

Instantly the captain, without a trace of cheerfulness now, shouted orders to take in sail and the ship became a hive of frenzied activity. Almost before the order could be carried out the gale struck her on the starboard bow and a number of Kanakas rolled over headlong and were clutching wildly at the lee rail in a welter of foaming water in the scuppers, like some grotesque figures in a Doré picture. Carmichael and Roderic were at the wheel, but their combined strength and all of Carmichael's experience were unavailing to right her. The men passed gaskets around their bodies. There was hoarse, strange orders that those strong men have a care not to be washed overboard, like small boys warned not to go out in the wet. The ship was awash, fore and aft, and the rigging of life lines on the dangerously slanting decks for the

crew to cling to seemed like a questionable remedy, with more risk than the disease.

Sea after sea came hurtling over her in thunders of destructive tumult, so that the ship quivered and shook, as though every tremor would be her last. What, it occurred to Roderic, was the use of fighting this monstrous world of waves and foam, to which the ship was like a shaving in a surf? A clear-eyed stoicism had suddenly settled upon him in the face of disaster. A deathly calm entered his soul. Oil bags were ordered overboard and those with difficulty were made fast to lines and cast astern. The ship might have been a bit of cork for all the response she made to wheel or oil bags. They might as well have been children's toy balloons. Then, on a sudden, one of the masts went crashing over the lee rail with a deadly lacerating sound of splintering; and simultaneously a green sea seemed to plunge the ship under water, and he remembered clinging to the wheel, submerged, clinging with deathlike grip.

From then on, in the blackness of the hurricane now directly over him and the welter of angry waters, all in Roderic's mind was confusion. He remembered only that Carmichael, who was there an instant before, was no longer there. Wild, grotesque figures, like maddened phantoms, were flying and crawling and clinging here and there. He was in the raging sea. He expected death. On a sudden a tiny flash of light, as though a camera shutter had abruptly opened in his mind, showed him a vivid picture and instantly closed again. In that thin clear flash he had seen not the home of his father at Adam's Rock, not the tranquil rooms or the peaceful garden toward which he had been hurrying, but the face of a girl — smiling, radiant, yet troubled and gazing questioningly, intently into his eyes — she who had drawn

him so irresistibly, the girl of his search, — Allene Galbraith.

What came after was a long series of dream visions, a farrago of polar scenes of snow and ice and dim, menacing, white monsters, as well as sunlit beaches and waving palms with dazzling laughing skies overhead. He resumed consciousness at moments like a sleeper half-wakened by the sun, who then immediately relapses into dreams. But through it all there was a grim undersense of clinging to something with a strange unshakable power and the sensation of being lifted up only to be hurled again from great heights into a welter of foam.

He became aware suddenly at the same moment of two facts: he was clinging to one of the two small rafts of the *Alice* and the sky was perceptibly lighter. He was still being alternately plunged into depths and raised high aloft, but the dream visions were absent. He looked to the right of him and the giant Kanaka was clinging to the other end of the raft. The Kanaka was both swimming and in a measure propelling the raft. The man's face was the color of brown ashes.

"Bad!" he uttered the single word as they rode on the crest of a wave, and he grinned faintly. And the struggle continued through an infinity of time, of hurling and plunging, of intense and concentrated triumph over the impossible. But always the sky was growing lighter.

"More better!" the Kanaka rattled out hoarsely, and the relief of those words sent a faint thrill through Roderic's vitals.

"Where are the others?" He shouted as he thought, but his voice was unheard by the Kanaka, who shook his head. Perhaps he had guessed Roderic's query. At all events, the question answered itself. There was no sign or vestige of anything pertaining to the *Alice* ex-

cepting this small raft with her name painted on it and the two clinging castaways.

The cleaving to life may be largely a mechanical affair, but the subconscious, unless charged with the burden of time, takes no thought of human hours. The breaking-up of the clouds and the emergence of the sun over the heavy rollers gave him unquestionably, in his then state, the effect of sunrise. A slight throb of joy warmed his thought. Then, as he dully reflected on the lonely speck of the raft in the vast solitude of troubled waters, his heart sank back into the heavy lassitude that is beyond hope or despair. But one must be a seaman for many years before one wholly abandons the passenger's trust in ultimate salvation from the deep.

"Think we'll get picked up?" He nevertheless made the effort to ask of the Kanaka.

"Maybe — maybe no," was the resigned reply of the brown giant. "Night come — he bad."

"Night!" cried Roderic with the sickness of death in his soul. "Isn't the sun coming up?"

"No — him go down," the man answered simply, and he smiled with a sad headshake.

Night was coming, not day. The heaviness of exhaustion was dragging at Roderic's limbs. A weary, numbing twilight state settled upon his mind and body. He clung on for a time. The westering sun was disappearing swiftly as though the havoc of the day had never been. The cruel indifference of nature to her creatures suddenly penetrated his consciousness like a barbed shaft of malice. What was the use?

"You go on," he murmured finally to the Kanaka. "I'm done. I'll let go."

"No, no," cried the brown man, and his great naked chest heaved with deep concern. "You lay down — rest. More better I take care." With an effort he helped the

white man to scramble farther up on the raft. He sought Roderic's belt; an inspiration came to him. Gropingly he unfastened it, passed it through one of the shoulder straps of Roderic's dungarees and round one of the timbers of the raft and clasped the end of the belt in the buckle.

"Now you rest good," he charged him and still he continued, three-fourths of him in the water, to propel the raft on the heaving sea. Again and again the waves washed over it, submerged and tossed it, but always it reëmerged and gradually the sea subsided.

Under the piercing brilliance of the stars, Roderic was wakened from his semi-stupor to a consciousness of intense and burning thirst. He was about to ask for water when the folly of it penetrated him like a slow poison and he sank back in silence. The Kanaka was lying stretched out beside him under the warm night, clinging with his hands to the timbers of the raft, his eyes sweeping the starlit horizon.

From a state of perturbed, weltering semiconsciousness, from broken fragmentary dreams of cascades of crystal-clear water in the mountains, Roderic awoke to a shout of the Kanaka that set him quivering.

"Looka! Looka!" cried the Kanaka. "Oba theah! Him land — suah!"

And Roderic saw that the sky was already aflame, presumably in the east, with strange fires. The rim of the sun had barely cleared the horizon. The world was filled with a clear and untarnished, with an untainted serenity that made Roderic gasp in the light of the tragedy of yesterday. Assuredly this was a strange moment in which to thrill to beauty, but it made upon his mind an indelible impression as the very essence of beauty. From this low point of visibility on the raft, he strained his eyes eagerly in the direction the Kanaka indicated.

Faintly he perceived a white milky radiance heaving and swaying in a line curving away from his gaze, and a faint possibly greenish hue beyond the gleaming white.

"Him land!" cried the Kanaka, now wildly dancing upon the raft. "Maybe island — maybe ring — atoll — I see him palms!" And as though to save his breath from further speech, he leaped backward into the now almost placid sea and began swimming madly, propelling the raft now with one hand, now with the other as he swam.

Fresh energies were suddenly stirring in Roderic's exhausted body. From some subcellar in his organism a new access of feverish force came to him. He also slipped into the water and his hands resting on the raft he began swimming and pushing the other end of it. His gaze was fixed steadily upon the horizon where the white line had been. The Kanaka's eyes, however, roved hither and thither and over his shoulders with anxious vigilance.

"Still looking for the others?" inquired Roderic faintly. This side of heaven he expected never again to see any other soul connected with the *Alice*.

"No," said the Kanaka briefly. "Me looka sharks."

Roderic grinned to himself piteously. This was a new terror unthought of. The gift of life seemed to be held by human beings on so very precarious a tenure. They swam on for a time in silence, until finally the Kanaka motioned him to scramble up on the raft. Roderic shook his head; though his spurt of strength was ebbing fast, he was determined to do his share. But the islander perceiving his weakness, swung himself out of the water upon the raft and seizing one of Roderic's hands drew him up without further speech.

Simultaneously and in silence they both shaded their eyes and gazed intently toward the line of white. It

was quite appreciably nearer and the haze dissolving under the rising sun showed the green beyond distinctly as vegetation crowding a slope close to the water. Gulls were wheeling about and the booming of the surf could now be distinctly heard. The sound of the white barrier was not inviting. Roderic's brown shipmate shook his head perplexedly.

"What's the matter?" demanded Roderic, his heart throbbing in a throat made seemingly of hot corrugated zinc.

"No can do," and the Kanaka explained in his manner that they were on the wrong side of the island, outside the barrier reef that nature in those parts puts like a moat round her garden spots, with only a small opening opposite some water course, where the coral refuses to build. The thundering surf is nothing to the little beasts and they build their rampart under its very hammer strokes. But a trickle of fresh water coming down a hill is enough to drive them away, thus leaving an opening in the reef opposite. To find that opening before their strength gave out was now the problem. Even as they talked and gazed, the roaring white wall seemed to be drawing nearer and its sound ever louder.

"Can't we swim round?" Roderic, feeling ignorant and helpless, nevertheless ventured.

"T'inka no," muttered the Kanaka. "Strong current —him go fast."

A strong current! That was the secret of their rapid progress toward the island which Roderic had imagined was achieved wholly by dint of their swimming. But in that progress also lay their undoing. For in the course of an hour or two, if not in less time, that current was certain to dash them, raft and all, upon the reef and there, under the thundering foam, they would perish and pass into the structure of the coral wall.

The Kanaka — statuesque, erect, his muscles automatically accommodating themselves to the slight swaying of the raft — stood for some time staring at the slowly nearing island, lost in what was for him the supreme effort, thought. In his ordinary life his instincts and the thought of others had largely sufficed. Now Roderic also grappled with thought painfully, as might a child. He felt himself penetrated by a wave of dull despondency. To be so near safety and yet to have it dashed from one's hands; to have survived the shipwreck that he could hardly yet bring himself to think of, except as a gruesome blur of the whole immediately tragic past; to be in sight of life and yet in the grip of death seemed a foolish preposterous nightmare. Death, death, death! What a stupid solution! But that seemed the favorite answer in the problem book of existence. Something, however, a force stronger than he, restrained him. *The next moment!* The unguessed possibility, the latent uncertainty, of the next moment held him riveted to life as it has held myriads of others, and with a horrid fascination of tense expectancy he clung to what remained of life.

With every minute they drew nearer to the reef. The island, so far as they could tell, was roughly heart-shaped, with the apex or point toward them. The barrier reef that upon the other side of the land no doubt had a break and an entrance to still water and safety, here and for some distance either way actually adjoined the land, so that reef and shore line were one. The current was certain to carry them up on the reef, regardless of any puny efforts of theirs. They did nothing therefore but awaited the inevitable.

Louder and louder boomed the surf and the geyser-like cloud of spray over the wall of foam made magic rainbows in the sun that kept burning ever hotter. The

sea, except for the thundering surf, was a carpet of jewelled velvet, the liquid floor of a possible heaven so sparkling blue, it made Roderic's heart ache with the heedless unconcerned beauty of it. Like a pair of birds spellbound by some gigantic reptile, white man and brown both kept gazing at their doom with a sickening lethargic fascination, as death kept drawing nearer and nearer. The blowing palm trees and the spiral-like tufted pandanus now discernible, just beyond, seemed already to be murmuring litanies over those to be delivered from the body of this death. Birds were hovering over the foliage. Gulls circled like vultures, crying overhead. A delicious fragrance came floating to their nostrils.

Suddenly the Kanaka leaped overboard and, clinging to the raft, he began propelling it as he had done before. He signalled with his head to Roderic to do the same. What was in his mind it is impossible to say, for he did not speak. Possibly he hoped that if the raft were pushed quickly broadside on into the boiling surf, it might act as a catapult and fling the clinging castaways upon the thin strip of sand or into the vegetation beyond and thus possibly save them. In any case, Roderic dumbly complied; speech was impossible for the roar of the waters.

Ever nearer and nearer they drew. But on a sudden the Kanaka's hands flew up. A wave of terror and pain distorted his broad features — a shriek of anguish faintly reached Roderic's ears — and he disappeared from sight. But one thing was visible, — sheering away to the right; the tip of a slate-gray triangular object that might have been the dark sail of a toy boat, — a shark's fin!

The terror of the Kanaka's face and his agonized shriek struck like a charge of shot into Roderic's heart. Unable to do anything else, he clung to the raft for an instant of intense, clear-sighted, silent expectancy of death and a similar fate amid the roaring of the waters. Yet,

death — death for him — was it possible? On a sudden he was being swept into the maelstrom, his breath cut off — swung and violently shaken and hurled high amid the spray and deafening roar — and the light of day and consciousness of life were both abruptly extinguished.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GIRL OF THE ISLAND

Voiceless birds of many colors were hovering overhead. A faint breeze was stirring through the coco-palm leaves, so that they rustled with a silken metallic sound indescribably soothing and agreeable. A hermit crab, with a beautiful shell not its own and a sea anemone clinging oddly to it, was scuttling along the coral sand on some personal mission. The bright morning sunlight — pure, dazzling and still soft — illumined a scene of paradisiacal perfection except for an excessive roar. Pure white sand gleamed on either side of him. It was warm to the touch.

So this was death! That, more like the faint reflection of a thought, like something in a mirror rather than the object itself, trickled through Roderic's consciousness and he closed his eyes again, impatient of the oppressive roaring in his ears. Thunder — gunfire? On a sudden, without any desire of his own, he sat up.

No, this could not be death; it was life! He felt the spray falling on his face, into his eyes, and he rubbed them languidly. He discovered that the muscles of his arms were aching. He endeavored to rise and he laughed like a person emerging from laughing gas over the aching painful stiffness in every part of him. His thighs and legs were all but immovable with pain.

Alive! alive! he cried inwardly, with a swelling exultation even as he winced under the pain, that certain proof and companion of human life. Stupefied, dazed,

he sat turning his head from side to side against the exquisite ache of the muscles of his neck, his lips parted, his eyes roving, dazzled. Yes, he was alive. By the mysterious agency or failure of all the forces that had seemed to conspire his death, he had been brought forth alive!

Where? That query barely flashed through his brain only to fall again into nothingness. For the present it signified less than the breeze overhead or the scuttling crab.

Water! That was the only thing that signified. Thirst racked and burned him. Water! All else was secondary. Water to drink, to fill himself with as one filled a barrel. His parched throat, as he tried to swallow, spread pain downward to his lungs, sideways into his ears, into his very brain. Water !

He gazed miserably about him, every movement of his body costly with pain. But only the roaring surf was before him and the forest on each side and behind him. A little farther down on his right he descried the raft with timbers twisted out of place being pounded by the surf against the beach.

The whole dread event of the shipwreck rushed back upon his mind and his senses reeled under the impact of the crowded images. The hurricane — the raft — the Kanaka!

But he must have water! Again he tried to rise. One of his bare feet was cruelly crushed and lacerated, with blood and white sand clotted about it. His bare arms were also torn and lacerated. He passed a hand over his smarting left cheek and felt a scab of dried blood.

"Lord!" he thought, "I'm a ruin."

Nevertheless he set his teeth and braced himself to rise. The pains from all parts of him sent a shower of light-flashes to his eyes, and he felt his cheek burn as his

face twisted. But he achieved a standing posture, and leaning against the rough surface of the palm, he turned his back upon the surf.

The jungle faced him!

If only he were in possession of a stick or a crutch! Fumbling, he felt in a deep pocket of his brown dungarees that were hanging in tatters about his thighs and calves. Yes, his clasp knife was there. But walking seemed impossible. Sinking down again, he began slowly, painfully, to advance on his hands and knees up the gentle slope down which the drooping trees seemed to come strolling toward the sea. A wealth of chaparral, ferns and weeds impeded him, but these he brushed aside and crept on over fallen coco palms, their crumpled green boughs useless for support. Their trunks, he perceived, were hollow inside. Was all this world mocking and hollow inside? Some hundred feet farther up the slope he came upon a plantation of gnarled old trees whose long branches, horizontally interlacing, gave him the effect of giraffes twining about each other's necks. From one of these *tou* trees he cut a staff with his clasp knife, clogged and sticky with sea water, and achingly dragged himself along. Now and then a bare spot was a vast relief after tangles of brush and ferns and creepers, giant lianas and ropes of convulvulus that formed intricate barriers to halt his progress. He cut and slashed with his knife here and there and opened a pathway through which he crept rather than to suffer the pain of going round it.

But where was he going, he suddenly asked himself in a dull bewilderment? And the thirst in his throat grew abruptly more consuming as he faced the blank answer of total ignorance. Cannibals! The word flashed through his brain and gave him momentary pause. Every South Sea traveler hears of cannibals, but seldom

meets any. The thought failed to find any anchorage in his consciousness.

"If they want me," he reflected somberly with the boyish American cast of humor, "they are welcome." He did not care. He cared for nothing, excepting only — water! Even a cannibal would have proved welcome to him then. On a sudden, as he leaned against a harsh-ribbed coco-palm trunk towering over him, he saw a small green nut lying at his feet. He gazed upon it and clutched the smooth oval shape in his hands as though it might escape him.

Tremulously he cut a slice from one end of it, held it to his open mouth and the tepid liquid that seemed cool to him drained into his hot throat. The strange, faintly dulcet flatness of it was like sparkling wine to his thirsting flesh. He stood with the empty shell clutched in his hands for a time, unable to take it from his mouth. He was fiercely intent upon draining the last drop of it. He panted as after deep exertion and uttered a profound sigh.

Why had he not thought of it before? He could not say. He had tasted coconut water only once in the past, and the impression it had left had been a negative one, unpleasant. He knew sailors drank it after a night of alcohol.

Swiftly, with shaking hand, he threw up the shell at the cluster of green nuts above in order to bring down more. His throw went wild. With a mighty effort he braced himself and threw a rough stone at the nut cluster of the lowest coco palm with all his strength. Two more green nuts, one no larger than a good-sized lemon, came thudding upon the soft ground. He sat down with his quarry in an access of rich triumph. Eagerly he drained the nuts, and the trickle of their flat liquid down his throat gave him a sensuous pleasure so great he could

hardly contain his joy. He uttered a shout. The blood seemed to course through his veins to a new rhythm. His brain felt clearer. He sat for a time as under a spell, contemplating the green shells and the white pithy circles where he had cut them, like a Hindu ascetic contemplating his own navel or the laws of the universe. Now he could go on.

He rose with a new alacrity, firmly grasped his staff and limped on. He paused now and then, to rest, to listen. Intense silence alone oppressed his ears. Alone! He felt the deathly depression of that fact creeping into his heart; he was alone on some small lost island, in mid-Pacific!

With diminished zest he tramped on, nevertheless. At a distance of perhaps a mile from the surf in a more or less straight line, though it had seemed like many leagues, he came upon a sight that for a moment flooded his heart with a tide of joy, completely obliterating even the thought of loneliness. From beneath a semicircle of darkened coral rocks a clear spring was bubbling and, amid the still loud but now intermittent boom of the surf, he could hear the blessed sound of the water as it went purling downward in the direction he had been walking. This was the watershed evidently, the highest part of the island.

A grove of banana trees stood guarding the spring like so many easy-going sentinels drowsing at their posts. Giant vegetables rather than trees in appearance, these plants, with their broad leaves hanging downward in flaps on either side of the midriff, their lazy droop and light lustrous green, seemed to embody the very spirit of the tropics, eternal languorous ease.

Roderic sank down on his hands and knees, bowed like an oriental worshipper at a shrine, and drank deep

from the crystal-clear water, raised his head upward like a fowl and drank again.

"The fountain of life," he said to himself. "In any case one need not fear to die here." Plans of vigil, sanguine hopes of being taken off by some passing ship, warm visions of being carried home to Boston — Adams Rock — began to form in his reviving brain; he sat down among the green, maizelike banana stems. A little golden lizard hurried by him in a fright. The huge dark-fingered leaves of breadfruit trees rustled faintly high overhead, and below him a giant bougainvillea creeper hid the view. Aerial orchids were clinging to branches here and there. Beauty was all about in endless coloring, a dozen varieties of perfume mingled into one delicious fragrance, but no sound of human life. If only his wounded feet permitted him to climb the breadfruit tree or the coconut stems, he might at this point learn as much as from the weary exploration of the entire island. But tree climbing was impossible for him now.

He rose up refreshed but with a body clamorous and shaking for want of food, and turned his face toward the bougainvillea arcade, down the rivulet from the spring. On a sudden he was startled so violently that he paused in his tracks. He noted beneath his feet a distinctly marked path. A path in his own familiar woods, near home, meant nothing. Here it meant a tremendous certainty. Animals or human beings, or both, had either been here or were here *now*. He listened as though expecting to hear footsteps. The same eternal silence of nature, composed of rustling leaves, purling water, and the distant boom of the surf, alone reached his straining ear drums.

Ravenous hunger suddenly gripped his interior like a thing with tentacles. He laughed aloud. Fool! With the reflex response of an animal he turned toward the

banana grove, scanned the plants for the ripest fruit, and gripping in one hand the leonine tail that hangs from every cluster, and with the other hand his hardwood staff, he struck and struck at the point where the stem of the cluster joins the main plant until the bunch came tumbling down and he with it.

He grinned to himself ruefully as his thigh struck a dry and fallen tree trunk. But heedless of pain, like some savage ancestor of his own, he fell voraciously upon the food and gorged like an animal. The smoothness, the creamy flesh, the tantalizing smell of the fruit! It was delicious fare, though dry, and he crawled to the spring for great draughts of water two or three times as he ate. He actually felt his middle swelling and distending, and with satiety came the tardy prompting to stop. Now he must go on about his exploration. But that was not so easy. A heaviness, a drowsiness, of all the senses, crept over him. Better rest a moment. More and more heavy grew his limbs and his eyelids kept falling as though weights were pulling them downward. He leaned upon one elbow — he sank his hand upon his arm — his limbs relaxed — he was asleep.

If he had any other dreams in that heavy sleep, he could not remember. Only the *Alice,* with her slightly rakish masts, her birdlike white sails and a smart dash of spray over her bows, — that was inimitably real. The girl Allene Galbraith was somewhere near and he thought old Carmichael had purposely made the ship lurch to show passengers what ships were for. He turned sharply to catch the malicious glint in old Carmichael's eye, and his own eyes unwillingly opened and he knew he was dreaming still.

For a girl was kneeling over him and peering into his face, a girl with puzzled questioning eyes, clear and starlike with wonder, with awe, — Allene Galbraith!

He closed his eyes, opened them again more easily and with a startled wakening consciousness moved his hand to brush away the phantom girl as one brushes away to fly. His hand encountered the bare forearm of the girl. It was smooth and warm.

He sat up slowly, unsteadily, with terrible eyes, his face within an inch of hers, her warm breath on his cheeks.

"You are better now," she uttered in a clear young voice, the well-remembered voice, with a note of something kindly, something solicitous. Oh, it was a dream assuredly!

"Crazy — dream," he began muttering, and the girl laughed softly.

"Oh, no!" she protested, with a gentle laugh. "This is no dream — I am quite real."

"How — did you get here?" he breathed with a fearful, staring bewilderment, as a man might address a ghost.

"How did *you* get here?" she demanded, with a note of concern that sent a thrill through him; and he made as if to touch her hand, but let his own fall again.

"Cast ashore — on the reef — in the raft —" he spoke in brief, gasping bursts, without framing words, his eyes holding hers as if in fear lest they and she might at any moment dissolve into air. "The *Alice* was wrecked," he added. "Hurricane yesterday — no, before yesterday — I don't remember the day." At the words "wrecked yesterday," the girl was shaken as by the shock of pain and she covered her eyes with her hands.

"The *Alice* wrecked — Oh, heavens! — Oh, poor Captain Flitch!" she cried with a sob of horror. "And his ship — she was named after his daughter — his poor family!"

"It hit us off the Paumotus," he added irrelevantly.

"Are — the others — any of the others — " she began in a whisper, and her face was aghast, horror-struck.

It was at that moment that he realized for the first time how deep may be emotion on the score of others.

"I don't know," he answered slowly, since she did not finish. "One of the Kanakas and I were on the raft. He was lost — off the reef — a shark."

"The reef!" she repeated mechanically and with a convulsive little shudder she leaped to her feet. Her glance had fallen upon his wounded leg.

"You are hurt," she cried, with a solicitude that broke upon his consciousness like a burst of sunrise. "Let me wash — or," she paused for a moment's reflection. "Do you think you could walk down the hill? Those coral cuts — coral sometimes infects wounds. There are medicines at the house. Do you feel strong enough to walk?"

"Oh, yes," he smiled faintly into her eyes. "I can walk — I walked up here from down below — and I have eaten ——" he pointed at the remnant of the bananas. He rose to his feet. But a griping pain seized him in the abdomen. His face contorted. And writhing, he sank to the ground.

"Oh, dear!" she faltered with perturbed indecision. "I hate to leave you alone here, but I'd better get down and bring help — to carry you."

To be twisted with pain seemed to him then, for some reason, in the highest degree shameful. A flush of heat came to his face.

"No — I can walk," he said with decision and rose to his feet, this time more carefully. "Must have eaten too many of those," he glanced with disgusted contrition at the bananas. They were heaping disgrace upon him.

"You were starving," she murmured pityingly. "Are you sure you can walk?"

"Oh, yes," he cried jauntily, stifling further indications of pain.

"It's less than a mile," she cheered him. "Do you think," she smiled, with a soft flush creeping up her cheeks, "you'd better lean — on my arm?"

Carefully, with no more pressure than the weight of a butterfly might cause, he laid the fingers of his left hand upon her arm below the elbow, leaning heavily with his free hand upon his stick. The soft flesh of her arm sent a thrill up his fingers.

Fatigue, exhaustion, seemed to have fallen away from him magically as they proceeded slowly downward along the brook. Internal and external pains went alike unheeded. A roar of exultation leaped in his impoverished blood, pounding in his eardrums. He did not exult at being saved, at his marvelous escape. He was not amazed at the strange accident that brought him to the Galbraiths' island. Those things were for later wonder. But with the triumphant egotism of youth he was telling himself — or some one, a masterful eager being within, was insistently telling him — that he had desired, *willed* above all things, to see this girl again, and infallibly, despite all obstacles, he had accomplished his desire! He laughed aloud in the irrepressible burst of his triumph.

"God! This is strange," he murmured easily, to cover his laugh. "I thought this place was uninhabited."

She also laughed. Her laugh sounded startled, as though he had broken in upon her thoughts. What was she thinking of all this time? He shot a sidelong glance at her. A starriness in her eyes, a preternatural brilliance, shone marvelously.

"Be careful," she warned; "there's a jagged stone here."

Once past the bougainvillea tangle and out of a grove

of dark shadowed breadfruit trees, the unknown side of the island became clear and visible. The trees became more sparse. A banyan tree in patriarchal luxury reclined with its family of trunks spread out, supported by a palisade of its own stilts; a few pandanus trees with their daggerlike leaves seemed to move spirally in the breeze and the ubiquitous palms bunched their glistening leaves to leeward. Clear spaces, lustrous bits of glade lay carpetlike between the boles, and few fallen trunks were visible here.

A brake of sugar cane waved gently to the left and a considerable garden land lay stretching on both sides of the stream. And above all there were houses, — real houses that gave the castaway's heart a sharp throb. Strictly speaking, there was only one house, gleaming white in the sun with a broad veranda, lifted from the ground on stakes, and some thatched sheds beyond it. On the right of the stream that was now perceptibly broader were perhaps eight or nine thatched huts, a copra-shed with a corrugated zinc roof nearer the beach, and a smaller shed similarly roofed. And beyond it all lay the mirror of a lagoon, of a blue so pure and deep it seemed to be sending up a perpetual hail of adoration to the heavens that gave it its color. Beyond the lagoon, except for a narrow break, the white surf kept foaming and thundering in a line curving gently to right and to left. That was the living end of the island. The vast unpeopled sea lay stretching out beyond.

"Does your foot hurt — much?" the girl asked Roderic after a silence, as his eyes swept the scene before him.

"No — not very much," he replied, whereupon she insisted that he sit down and rest. He complied readily, for now he became abruptly anxious not to come upon those habitations below too soon. The girl sank down

on the grass near him, beside a flaunting hibiscus bush with its flaming black-tongued flowers. For no reason at all, these scarlet flowers shot like an arrow into his brain a fleeting picture of Myrtle Thornley. He frowned at the memory.

"Do ships ever call here?" he broke the silence by inquiring, again wholly in ignorance of his motive.

"Oh," she laughed, "don't be worried by that. Father will manage to get you away somehow. But you must get well."

"Oh, I'm in no hurry," he blurted out quickly and inwardly called himself a fool and a churl.

"It's not that," he stammered. "But a shipwrecked sailor can't be much use here — and he's got to be fed, I suppose, until you get rid of him."

"We've never had one here before that I know of," she answered brightly. "And we have lots of food."

One remembers oddly trivial things as Roderic long remembered this first exchange of words between them on the island, because for him it possessed at the moment an immense significance. The soul within him, against the background of the amazing present, against the past tragedy that led to his appearance here, longed to declare its chivalry and fineness to this girl who had been figuring in his dreams. But stammering words were still all he could command. The girl beside him impressed him curiously. At one moment she was a mere young thing, light and fragile, scarcely the person to be rescuing a castaway, the girl of the *Alice*. The next instant she seemed of towering importance with an aura of sheltering personality about her, with radiance and power, a Nausicaa who could command all the resources and hospitality of this little world. She seemed on a sudden infinitely less familiar than in his vision of her and he felt himself humbled and overawed.

"I think I can go on all right now," he murmured and rose to his feet. With a grave serenity the girl also rose and they proceeded again, this time without the aid of her arm. From time to time in their slow progress her white forehead puckered as she gazed toward the settlement, as if seeking some one in the distance or conjuring away untoward omens.

The intense light of the cleared spaces was pouring all about them, and the purity and beauty of the scene, of the clear heavens and the flashing sea and the inviolate verdure, made him strangely reluctant to approach any nearer to the place of habitations. There came drifting to his nostrils faintly a peculiar smell from the direction of the shining lagoon, an odor haunting and faintly acrid, the odor of South Sea beaches and reefs, the odor of decay.

Oddly enough that slight unrelated sensation gave him a sudden access of courage. After all, this was no fantasy, no old tale of an ogre's castle. It was an ordinary Pacific island and those boats in the middle of the lagoon were manned by ordinary shouting natives under the rule of a white man. His confidence returned. He withdrew his eyes from the grayish-white verandah'd house that kept obtruding itself hynotically on his gaze.

"Well, anyway," he said abruptly, as though at the end of an argument, "I can work for your father until — until I leave. I ought to be able to earn my salt."

The girl at his side stared at him with wide-eyed incredulity and something like a cloud settled on her countenance.

"Do you think," she demanded, "we are such heathens as that? Do you think so badly of us — that we can't do anything for a shipwrecked sailor without — without ——" and she turned away quickly.

Abashed now, he searched her averted face. Tears were gleaming in her eyes. He halted.

"I am awfully sorry," he stammered in contrite confusion. "But — put yourself in my place. I didn't exactly come here by invitation. I don't say your father will throw me into the sea — even the hurricane didn't quite succeed in doing that. But wouldn't he have a right to feel — annoyed — having a man land on him like this?"

She laughed now and that cheered him like wine.

"Let us say no more about it," she commanded gently. "You have survived the hurricane and a shipwreck. That ought to be quite enough for you just now."

"I guess you are right," he answered eagerly, anxious to appease her. "I'm sorry I said that. Let's go on." And his confidence returned with a rush and he stepped out more lightly.

The events that led him and brought him hither, the accidents and fatalities, the girl walking beside him, destiny itself seemed suddenly to fall into their subordinate places as merely the thralls and servants of his potent inner desires, of his dreams. In a flash of a kind of premonitory clairvoyance he seemed to be in the midst of a life experience on this island, strange yet inimitably familiar, — life, with its doubts, storms, troubles, yet with a sure conviction of ultimate triumph. He smiled wryly at himself. Was he still dreaming?

Nevertheless he felt within him a freshet of new confidence to meet old Galbraith. Why should he fear or hesitate? Old Galbraith himself was but the servant and instrument of his imperious destiny, that outfaced and outmarshalled accidents, hurricanes, shipwrecks. Yes, he could meet him. Unconsciously his lungs expanded, his head rose higher, his nostrils dilated. For one in-

stant he saw the irresistible indomitable Dream and himself as one.

A brown girl, wearing a single garment of chequered calico, with bare feet and bare arms, came running toward them and spoke excitedly to Allene in the native tongue for an instant. Allene answered her briefly and the brown legs went dashing back to the veranda'd house.

The stilts, he now saw as he approached the dwelling, were the tall rough-hewn columns that supported the broad veranda, completely surrounding the four-square house, set within a couple of hundred yards of the lagoon. A few fruit trees stood about like sentinels left after the skirmish of clearing, to bring shade and shelter, and the gray-white roof of corrugated metal lay gleaming and reflecting back the sunlight. An intense stillness, like a property of the air, surrounded the house.

A brown woman, elderly and portly, with mild liquid eyes, clad in the single native garment like a wrapper, starchy with cleanliness, was standing at the foot of the stair leading to the veranda and the living quarters and she smiled broadly. With a flow of speech in her native tongue she bobbed and laughed and smiled again, put her great arm round Roderic's shoulder and all but carried him up the steps, across the veranda, through the matted tafa-colored hall, low-ceiled, broad, but little encumbered with furnishings, and into a sweet-smelling room with flowers upon a low table and a bed dazzling white.

Before he knew it she had stripped him of his torn, sticky, salt-rimed garments, had thrown a gray dressing gown about him and was bathing his wounds and lacerations with cool soothing waters. With a gesture she bade him relax upon the bed. He was abashed before this natural woman who took such liberties with his person. Fitful little flashes of shame alternated with

gusts of the confident gratitude of a tired child that is being put to bed by nurse or mother. In the revulsion of feeling after his long stretch of drawn-out suffering and intense exhaustion, Roderic experienced a subtle contentment, a rush of roof-tree happiness, of repose, infinitely grateful to every cell in his body. He closed his eyes for an instant and then as he opened them, again he saw Allene Galbraith in her cool white frock, standing in the doorway, smiling, with the expression of greeting on her lips, giving him oddly the effect of a vision, of a far-off myth or fairy tale, when immortals appeared to mortal men at critical moments.

"You will be all right now," she murmured soothingly, "now that Akura has the care of you. She knows how to make sick people well."

Her speech broke the spell of silence and by a sudden transference of his emotions, all his gratitude toward Fate and the immortal gods poured about this human girl and irradiated her as a burst of light irradiates a dazzling cloud.

"Oh, she's fine," he blurted out eagerly. "But it's you — you are doing all this — for me — and I don't deserve it ——" his past rudeness to her came back to him for an instant, dark, confused and shadowy. "On the ship I spoke to you like a —— I behaved abominably," he summarized with a weary sadness. "And yet you've done all this — I hope you can forgive me. I'll ——" his voice was for a moment uncertain — "I'll never forget this to my last minute," he ended huskily, looking downward.

An expression of vaguely startled surprise upon her face gave way swiftly to a sweep of brightness, a warm caressing kindness that seemed like a hidden quality of life, appearing at only rare intervals on earth, that can make the faces of some women more beautiful than

any art has yet captured the secret of, and impulsively she aproached the low bed where he rested.

"You mustn't feel that way about — 'me,'" she had been going to say, but changed it to "us," girl-like. "We are only doing what anybody else would do in our place. You mustn't bother to thank us — only rest and get well — even before you talk. Don't let *anybody* make you talk now. Here is Akura, with some coconut milk," as the brown woman reëntered the room, chattering softly. "She says your lacerations from the coral are quite bad and need great care. Please, just feel at home — and don't worry. That's one thing we don't allow on this island," she added with a laugh — "worry. The climate won't stand it."

He laughed also. "Your father" — he began. He hardly knew what he was going to say. But the thought of her father, the testy old man whom he remembered so vividly, was the one oppressive background to what thus far had proved an unclouded paradise. But she interrupted him so readily that he knew instinctively her mind also was not devoid of some thought of the old man.

"—— Oh, father will be very glad," she broke in hastily. "He was a sailor himself — and father is very generous," she added as though herself feeling the need of a deeper assurance.

"Good-by," she murmured gently as Akura put the bowl of coconut milk on the low table beside the bed. "Akura understands everything you say, so if there is anything you want ——" and she nodded to him with a warm, a gracious intimacy that drew his heart with a sudden bound towards her, as only spontaneous kindness can draw a human heart long adrift and menaced.

With a quick unthinking impulse his hand flew out as though to take hers, hesitated for an instant, then fell

back upon the white bed covering. She flushed consciously, glanced downward into his eyes and hurried away, murmuring something about Akura.

At the same moment, outside the door in the hall, he could hear old Galbraith's voice booming and calling for Allene.

Plainly I see even now the Roderic Whitford of that day lying back among the sheets, listening intently, though all his members were wondrously relaxed, listening to Galbraith's voice and hearing it suddenly lowered as though in response to signs from his daughter. A flush came to his cheeks at the instinctive conviction that to the old man he was bitterly unwelcome. But there he was, he kept telling himself wearily, after shipwreck and hazard and suffering. He took the bowl of milk, drained it almost at a gulp and sank back, closing his eyes once more feeling himself swept by a current of circumstances too mysterious and potent to be resented. The uncertainty of the future assumed a kind of playful jocund absurdity in his relaxing brain. Who could guide the future in the light of the past?

As to old Galbraith's daughter, she was — apart — and forever — and he sighed profoundly. —— He was at rest.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUPERFLUOUS MAN

For two days Roderic lay tended and pampered, bathed and anointed, fed with an opulent yet simple diet of fish and fowl, with wondrous dishes compounded of the island fruits and vegetables, for which he discovered in himself a shameful capacity. Akura kept coming and going with the softness of a maternal nurse and Allene Galbraith looked in now and then, at intervals disappointingly infrequent, and only when Akura was in the room.

With returning strength his immediate future preoccupied him at times as a part of the languid drifting speculations of a man regaining his bodily vigor, but he tended less and less to brood upon the matter. The future must shape itself as best it could.

Only once did Old Galbraith enter his room. It was on the morning after his arrival. Akura was gliding noiselessly about when Galbraith, looking eight feet tall and magisterial in white drill, strode in, stood in the middle of the apartment without speaking for a space, as though composing his sharpened features to a particular desired pitch of severity, and then approached the bed rigidly. Roderic's muscles instinctively tautened. In the light of the angry though supressed outburst he had heard in the hall the day before, his expectations were wearily depressing.

"Aye, young man," began Galbraith with a sharp

nod, as though his head were moved by wire springs, "so poor Flitch is gone and you're saved!" And his lips contracted into an expression which Roderic read as the bitter and contemptuous satisfaction in the certainty of the topsy-turviness of Fate. Galbraith's unspoken thought was plainly saying:

"So it is, as I might have foretold, when by all the laws the exact opposite should have happened."

"I don't know, sir," Roderic answered seriously but without shrinking from the severity of his host's look. "He might be saved. They might all be saved for all I know — except the Kanaka."

Galbraith after a moment of silence shook his head.

"No," he said. "A good sailor was Flitch but — no. Unlikely. Where were you bound for — the ship?"

"San Francisco, sir."

"Then what the devil was Flitch doing about here?" he demanded irascibly. "Way off her course?"

Roderic explained that the *Alice* was to call at Acapulco first.

"Ah," he nodded, "that was it. Canny sailor was Flitch — and he is gone!" He stood ruminating for a space and nervously biting his grizzled mustache.

"As for you," he began, then on a sudden he checked himself. "I'll talk to you when you get up," he flung out and moved away with the staccato briskness of aged limbs.

"I can get up now, sir," Roderic called after him. The old man wheeled sharply about midway to the door.

"You'll stay where you are until further orders," he snapped and turning again left the room.

A flash of indignant revolt for a moment sent the pulses drumming in Roderic's blood. Then he turned to the wall and laughed silently.

"I don't seem to get that old boy," he said to him-

self. "But he certainly is sorry I wasn't drowned. I guess he doesn't like me as a boarder."

A few minutes later Allene Galbraith entered the room and seemed more than usually gentle and solicitous. She was in something gray and clinging, of a zephyrlike fineness, held by a blue girdle, with a tiny spray of flowers drooping over the knot. She charged him above all to think of nothing but rest. That was all he now needed. He perceived this time plainly a note of anxiety, an unaccustomed harassment in her voice. But she did not linger.

The next day he was determined to get up. The sensations that followed upon his long efforts at clinging to life, by now dim and nightmarish in his memory, the yearning for peace, the desire for rest, had mysteriously left his frame. The lassitude of invalidism was shaken off. He was not precisely charged with energy, but he could no longer stay upon his back.

"I must get up, Akura," he informed his brown nurse, adding a gesture to enforce meaning.

Akura smiled as always, her white teeth gleaming, came and bent over him, softly put her hand on his still bandaged foot, looked at the lacerations on his arms and nodded. She signified that she would report upon his case.

Out in the hall he soon heard a low murmur of consultation between Akura and Allene. "Tapena Bruce," figured repeatedly in their colloquy. A moment later the girl came to the door of his room without approaching him.

"Akura says you want to get up," she began gaily. "but do you really think you'd better — just yet?"

"Oh, yes," eagerly. "It's foolish for me to be in bed any longer. I'm quite strong enough. Only trouble is," he added shamefacedly, "I have no clothes."

"I've thought of that," and the words cheered him more than anything since his first interview with old Galbraith. "But — if you really feel strong enough, Akura will bring you some of Bruce's clothes."

"Bruce?" he murmured dubiously. He had believed the father and the daughter to be the only white people upon the island.

"Oh, you don't know, of course," she explained, advancing nearer. "Bruce is a sort of relation of ours. He's about your size — though older, I should think. He lives with us. He's away with the schooner, over at Papeete. We shall have to borrow some of his clothes for you. I'm sure," she added, with a little pucker in her forehead, "he would be only too glad to let you have them."

Why the light of the room should become somewhat dimmed, why something within him should dampen and deaden at the mention of another man living on the island with the Galbraiths, is one of those mysterious things among the tangle of emotions that ordinary mortals cannot yet explain. He had never seen this Bruce and was only just hearing his name for the first time. Whoever Bruce was, he was nothing more to him now than a name. But decidedly some of the zest in his spirit at the thought of rising, at the sight of Allene, for the first time that morning was perceptibly flattened. A slow smoldering flicker of resentment unaccountably crept into his consciousness.

"Oh, I — didn't know," he answered dully. "I wish there were some other way I could get clothes — but I don't know how."

"Don't let that bother you in the least," the girl spoke briskly, scanning his face; and hastily turning away, she added over his shoulder, "Akura will bring you some

at once. We don't need much here," and she laughed, a shade loudly for her.

An intuitive glimpse of knowledge that she vaguely understood what was passing in his mind brought a throb of cheer. To have his scruples, his mind, understood by a fellow creature, was what the exile in him was hungrily craving. To be understood by Allene was the desire he secretly cherished just then above all things.

The clothes of the mysterious Bruce consisted of a singlet, a striped shirt with a rolling collar and a pair of coarse duck trousers somewhat small for him, but he clad himself in them with eagerness. No shoes were given him, but when he pointed inquiringly at his bare feet, Akura brought him a pair of sandals of cane, not unlike the Japanese, with a thong passing between the big and second toes, with soles of shark's skin. Once dressed, he incontinently fled his room as though it were a prison, passed into the hall and looked exploringly about him.

The personality of the room dawned upon him slowly. It gave him an effect of richness by its very scantiness of furnishing. At home he would have called it a barn of a place. Yet here the dimness, the dark waxed floor, scattered with native-woven mats, the odd mixture of small bits of English work, Adam and Sheraton, little tables, two or three chairs, a small French cabinet or two, were interspersed like precious curios among the roughly made chairs and one large dark-wood table of seemingly local craftsmanship. A French sofa in flowered and gilt damask was evidently the most prized of the possessions. One or two portraits hung upon the dark walls and that was the "hall." Homes in this region had not heretofore been open to him. This was the first island home he had ever really seen.

A picture of his father's living room suddenly came

before him, — the living room with its coziness, its abundance of harmonious furniture, its fulness of "things," so that in parts of it you could not pass without brushing or rubbing against something. And oddly enough it was the home environment that now seemed the foreign one. This large airiness, this spacious emptiness, seemed the natural setting of a home.

Still alone, he passed through one of the doors to the veranda and walked slowly round to the side facing the lagoon which he had not yet in reality seen. A colonnade of palm trees stretched down toward the water, planted in perfect symmetry, and a path of coral slabs between the trees made a gleaming white ribbon running between those columnar tree trunks. Their foliage rustled gently in the breeze and the sunlight poured down from a cobalt sky that dazzled and overpowered the eye so that he blinked owlishly as he stared. He sank down on a cane settle facing seaward.

Down by the lagoon he saw old Galbraith in white with a pith helmet giving orders to some nearly nude native men who were busy with shovels and barrows and in the middle of the lagoon a single diver's boat was busy at its quest for shell. A gentle breeze was blowing inshore from across the reef. The faint odor of decay, not wholly disagreeable, came drifting to his nostrils. The blue Pacific beyond lay stretching endlessly. Not a cloud, not a sail anywhere and scarcely a ripple except for the surf outside the reef. A little cosmos, the world forgetting and of the world virtually unknown. A vacillation came abruptly to his mind. As though some one were asking him to make a choice, Roderic began to weigh the outside, the world he had come from, against this before him. It was beautiful, magical, but was it life?

As though in answer to his query Allene Galbraith stood suddenly beside him.

"Oh, here is the invalid!" she exclaimed gaily. "What a splendidly quick recovery — Mr. Whitford. Akura is a good nurse, isn't she? She brought me up after — my mother died," and she seated herself at the other end of the settle.

The girl's voice fell with singular music upon his ear. He could not reply for a moment, so delightful was the surprise of her voice and speech as it intervened in his idle speculation.

"Then she made a very good job of it," he finally answered. "She deserves a medal for me — so why not a statue for you?"

Her gay laughter was delicious to his hungry senses. For the first time on the island he was feeling normal, himself.

"I'll have to mention it to father," she said. "But we have no sculptor here. Perhaps you are a sculptor?"

"No," he shook his head. "Nothing so useful. I am a sailor — that's about all."

She looked at him for a moment with puzzling inquiry, then gazed away at the beach and the Pacific beyond.

"How did you come on poor Captain Flitch's ship?" she demanded, suddenly serious. "You might as well tell me now, if you feel like it. There's nothing to do this morning."

For fully a minute he hesitated. His story, — could he tell it to her? Perhaps — with reservations. Then quite simply and frankly he gave her an outline narrative of his going to sea (omitting in his youthful self-consciousness all mention of Myrtle Thornley) of his decision to ship in a steamer homeward bound and yet of his sudden change to Flitch's vessel, bringing up to

the hurricane, of which he found it difficult to speak freely.

"But why," she broke in, "didn't you go on the steamer? You might have been safely home by now." He held her eyes for a moment and then turned his own away.

"I wanted ——" he explained, "I wanted to see — Papeete again."

When he turned toward her she was looking downward into her lap, playing with her fingers. She did not look up. "I see," she murmured gravely. "That was — what do they call it — kismet — Fate."

"Do you like living here on the island?" he suddenly asked her.

"Oh, I!" she jumped up lightly. "What do I matter. This is home to me. I am happy anywhere. Father decides everything for me."

"I should have thought you would decide a good deal for yourself," he told her.

"There comes father now," she answered irrelevantly. "He'll be glad to see you about. Do, please, I ask you," she added hurriedly, like a warning, "let him think that he is deciding everything for you too — that you are — well — that's a little way of his."

And in spite of the enigmatic tone of her words, Roderic felt a flash of surprise to hear this girl in her innocence speak with so much guile. Young as she was, she knew her world.

She left him then, with a nod, and his gaze turned moodily toward the beach, where it rested upon the old man walking with a stiff and rigid energy, like a jointed mechanism, up to the coral path between the palms. As by an effort he seemed to carry his head defiantly high, so that the white helmet, tilting backwards, gave its wearer an appearance almost rakishly haughty.

"Proud!" thought Roderic with a shadowy smile. The old boy was undoubtedly proud of the little world he had built up in this solitude, reclaimed as it were from the engulfing ocean, ruling here to all appearances like a monarch. But what is this tiny island, he reflected, against the vast world beyond, that neither knows nor cares a jot about its very existence? Then the young man in his moody solitude had a flash of intuition that later in years came back to him with greater clarity and force: Every man on earth is busy and violently intent upon building up a small domain where he is chief and monarch, that he clings to and holds against the rest of humanity. And collectively those tiny fiefs wrung out of the encompassing stress of life make up the World.

"Well," he thought, as old Galbraith drew nearer, "I could make more of it than he has done. I could put more *life* in the place, more than he has left in his old bones. But what's the use? I suppose he's coming to tell me how he's going to ship me away. I don't care. I'll be glad. But that girl! —— Think of her remaining alone in this place without a soul — I wonder," his thought suddenly jumped, "who this fellow Bruce may be?" He heard the sound of the old man's feet upon the lower steps leading to the veranda and he sat up expectant.

"Well, my fine fellow," crackled the old man, "so you're up and about! And who gave you leave to come out?" Roderic laughed at this absurdly magisterial form of speech and decided to take it humorously.

"My nurses, sir," he answered pleasantly. "They aided and abetted me — lent me these clothes."

"Well, I am dashed!" exclaimed Galbraith without a shadow of humor. "Gave you Bruce's clothes without a word to me — how dared they? How dared they? Eh?"

Roderic could not enlighten him: but he experienced a fleeting wish that he could throw them in his face. Yet there was a dignity about the old man — and after all, was not this his world?

"I am sorry, sir," he murmured. "But what could they do? I had no clothes of my own. I'll pay for them sometime when ——"

"Damn your pay," spluttered the old man. "Sit down there," he thundered, for Roderic had risen. "Now the question is, what am I going to do with you?" and he paused as though waiting for an answer. Roderic's dumb stare did not enlighten him.

"You came just too late for the schooner," he glowered testily. "Bruce left for Papeete the morning you got here. Could have shipped you off handily. Why the devil didn't you get here a day sooner?"

This was irresistible to Roderic and he exploded with stifled laughter. The old man spoke as though the castaway might have arrived by any one of innumerable trains and wilfully chose the latest one. Galbraith glared irascibly at him, without so much as a smile.

"The dashed hurricane," he muttered musingly. "Well, young man, I'm hanged if I'll send the schooner to Papeete especially for your sake when she gets back!"

"Don't ships ever call here?" murmured Roderic with uneasy wonder.

"Ships? No!" thundered Galbraith. "Once in years Levy may call in here to look for — no!" he interrupted himself. "No ships. Don't want ships nosing about here. This is no place for ships. My schooner goes every six months or so to Papeete. What am I to do with you? Keep you here six months?" he added with obviously bitter repugnance at the thought.

This was more than Roderic could bear. A sudden revulsion of anger shook his frame, whether begotten

by the anger of Galbraith or born of the first opportunity for real resentment against something senseless and buffeting that was neither wind nor sea, but human.

"Why not throw me into the lagoon," he flashed out, "or out there the other side of the reef? That shark may still be outside ——"

"Silence!" cried Galbraith in goaded amazement. "You talk to me like that, after — after — you talk to me ——" further speech choked him so he quivered from head to foot.

After all that nursing and kindness Galbraith was going to say. Yet he did not say it. That glimpse of something — something fine in the old man's character, despite his quivering temper, shot through Roderic like a current.

"I am sorry, sir. I forgot myself." He spoke out clearly and calmly. "But you see, Mr. Galbraith, I didn't ask to come here. It happened like that. I know I'm no good to you. I'll do whatever you say."

With his hands clasped behind and his fingers working agitatedly, Galbraith fell to pacing the veranda back and forth, as though no one else were there, as though he and his hot thoughts were alone.

"Is there nothing I can do — to earn my keep?" Roderic suddenly asked in a low tone.

"Do!" the old man wheeled about. "Who wants your doing? What can you do that a Kanaka can't do ten times better? Do! Don't want white labor here. No place for beach combers!"

Once again the wave of anger heaved in Roderic's bosom but this time he checked it sharply. Sternly he refused to fall into offending his host and the father of Allene, who had been a very angel for kindness.

"No, sir, I know," he spoke quietly. "But here I am — by accident — until I get off the island."

"Yes — until," the old man muttered bitterly — "until!"

"When may I go to work, sir?" Roderic went on with persistence.

Galbraith looked at him fixedly for a moment, then turned toward the door leading to the hall.

"Come down to those sheds on the beach to-morrow morning," he threw out sharply over his shoulder, and helmeted head inclining forward, he disappeared indoors.

And again, for no reason that he could precisely define, Roderic experienced a surge of triumph in his breast, in his very bones. Fortune and accident and blindest chance had ruled every one of his actions, had carried him, swept him and cast him hither like the veriest drifting wood or fragment of flotsam.

But a faint yet irresistibly certain gleam in his heart, in the nethermost roots of his being, was telling him that his own will had carried, managed and contrived his actions. He was startled to feel with appalling certainty that every event, how bizarre and strange soever in its falling out, was the accurate shadow of an imperious decisive entity, of a guide and leader in the ultimate depths of his own soul.

CHAPTER X

THE STONE BY THE POOL

A blazing noonday sun was pouring down upon the beach from a cloudless sky of such intense blue that it had the effect of changing the human conception of fire. Fire, abstract fire, which is commonly fixed in men's ideas as red, seemed undoubtedly blue. A gentle inshore breeze, that came sighing across the lagoon from the ocean beyond the reef, alone made any work possible for Roderic, child of cool mists, reared amidst five months of snow annually and days and weeks of leaden skies.

Roderic was working. With his eyeballs aching from the glare and the intense contraction of his pupils under the broad brim of his shapeless, flapping, pandanus-fiber hat, he was shifting deal boxes from the shed that was the store, in anticipation of Bruce's return from Papeete with the forty-ton schooner. The new store of provisions was to take the place of those crates and boxes, some of which, containing small remnants of their stock, he emptied upon the shelves and narrow counter. From the dimness of the shed he carried the crates out into the glare and thought he actually felt his pupils contracting to pins' points. The sweat was running in streams down his back and into his eyes, which he kept wiping with his bare brown arm. He glanced out toward the lagoon at the two divers' boats and envied the great-chested divers their repeated submergence under the incredibly azure surface of the mirrorlike expanse. The shouts

and voices of their brown helpers in the boats sounded childishly cheerful and happy under the coppery heat.

"Working" — said Roderic somberly to himself, "working for what? For a little food at the hands of an angry-livered old man who has made himself virtual ruler of this dot of land in the vast spaces of the globe."

The intolerable burden of labor without hope, which is the cause of so much stress upon the earth, came home to him that day more sharply than ever during the preceding weeks since his recovery; than, indeed, ever before.

So revolting was the thought that instantly his mind set to work of itself mitigating his lot. He was working, his mind informed him, for the passage to Papeete and home at the end of another five months or so. It was an interlude, an enforced interval incidental to his peculiar place in life, incidental to —— But, no! — That wasn't enough. Some hope or guerdon aside from that must crown the hours and days of labor, even if his imagination had to supply it. Othewise it was horrible, monstrous. A compulsory guest, like a convict, and treated as one, — moved out of the house into a thatched hut of bamboo upon stilts like an ape in a cage; his food brought to him as to a beast! It was so his reflections went simmering in his skull under the brilliant sun, when suddenly he paused and straightened. Like a dart a thought of bold defiance struck through his brain.

He was here working and waiting for only one reason, — Allene! For the first time he told himself this fact boldly, angrily.

The meticulous care with which Galbraith kept the girl and himself apart, always seemingly standing like a quivering shadow between them, keeping Roderic employed under his eye, having his daughter constantly with him in the house, on the veranda, on walks, had virtually alienated Roderic's mind from any hope of be-

coming more friendly or even better acquainted with her. His past dreams and visions of her came to seem more and more the bitterly grotesque fancies of a sick or unhinged child.

Old Galbraith, determined evidently to show him his place, had more and more alienated all of Roderic's notions from anything even remotely resembling equality or association. Smart and burn as he would under the treatment, Roderic had been compelled to adjust himself to it, to accustom himself to the idea of a wide gulf between him, the castaway from nowhere, the hand before the mast, and the carefully secluded daughter of the house. He had seen visions of himself narrating his story as an equal to old Galbraith, of the gradual softening of the crusty old martinet, of living on equal terms, of close friendship with the whites of the island. But the old man never for an instant encouraged conversation, never relaxed his wire-taut aloofness, never spoke to him except in staccato explosive commands. His daughter could not say much more than a good morning to the stranger and even that under her father's eye. She, Allene, was obviously the reason for the old man's fierce and jealous detestation of him. The stranger in turn could not consort with the natives, so he was virtually a prisoner of silence.

His only friend, Akura, who often sighed over him upon the occasions when she brought his food to the bamboo hut, could unfortunately utter nothing but isolated words of cheer or sympathy, and even she was evidently under orders.

That hot day, however, under the all but intolerable sun, he suddenly told himself that he would change all this, — a lawless and uncertain thought that yet remained to be executed. But he felt spurred to nameless action.

He glanced with somewhat youthful belligerence about the beach and toward the house, but his stern wrath-incrusted taskmaster was nowhere about.

"The heat must have got him," he murmured to himself, and aproaching a group of three palms drooping and mirroring themselves Narcissus-like in the lagoon, he stripped and dived head foremost under the surface. He rested for a moment on the coral-strewn bottom and then emerged and stood to his chin in the water to cool his heated blood.

Three minutes later he came out, dressed quickly and walked resolutely up the path skirting the taro patches on the right lip of the stream toward the hill grove of breadfruit trees. Beyond those lay the spring and the grove of feis where he had first drunk deep and found Allene, and the hope — that was now anger and bitterness.

"Must take stock and think things over," he reflected, but no new ideas would come to him as he ascended the slope. Beauty was all about him, purao, hibiscus and candlenut trees, liana and bougainvillea and wondrous ferns. Through a plantation of thin, dun-colored guavas, where the sun burned hot, he made his way with more throb and excitement now, like a fugitive, to another incult spot fringed by clusters of bamboo, that swallowed him like some blessed world of lustrous green, and a gorgeous variety of color, where all human cares seemed a grotesque anachronism. Fording a small creek that came from his left, another tributary feeding the stream below, he found himself in a few minutes at the rude horseshoe of blackened rocks, from the curve of which bubbled the jetting spring.

He sat down upon the rock where first he had rested as a battered castaway and under that vivid gloom, in the midst of that living silence, he sighed in profound re-

laxation. Geological epochs ago now seemed that day when first he had come here, and his present state by comparison suddenly assumed a brighter color. Thought now began to distil in his brain freely.

"A man could exist here alone, independent of other human beings," he told himself. "One need not starve. There were the banana plants, the coco palms and the breadfruit trees and a huge Pandanus, or screw pine, that alone could almost give shelter under its tentlike supports upon which the main trunk stood. Wattled with its own leaves and bamboos it would make a sort of dog-hutch where one might measurably escape the elements. But to come to the point of thinking and feeling thus independently," it occurred to him, "all the nursing and the care of Allene and Akura had gone before." That reflection gave his defiant train of batlike thoughts a sudden pause. Man may be roughly described as a grateful animal, in despite of much evidence to the contrary. Roderic was for the moment nonplussed by a surge of gratitude in his heart. "They, too, these women, were the prisoners and thralls of the old man below," his spirit whispered. The power and potency of old Galbraith's personality suddenly loomed thick and opaque before him, a wall, a bastion of stone. That was the obstacle before him that required assault and combat. How unfathomably solitary he had been here on the day of his arrival! How profoundly solitary he was here to-day! Life, it occurred to him, was under all circumstances a passage of abysmal solitude through infinite emptiness.

A stirring of the brush at the bougainvillea arch below suddenly startled him and arrested his attention. He leaped to his feet with the intent alertness of the quarry rather than the hunter. There, under the arch, stood the white figure of Allene Galbraith.

Roderic's first thought was that she was coming with her father, stalking him. Her ambiguous smile did not reassure him. But as she began to advance slowly and he saw she was alone. Joy leaped up in his heart.

"You've come to visit the spring — as I have," he called out and automatically advanced toward her. A flutter of color, of embarrassment, played upon her features. She moved forward falteringly, as one in doubt and timidly temerarious.

"Yes, I often come here," she began, speaking quickly. "I think it is the loveliest spot on the island. This is where our house ought really to stand, instead of on the hot beach. Do you come here, too?"

"This is the first time," he explained, perceiving her embarrassment, "since the time — the day you found me here. I haven't had much time."

And in his memory suddenly shone that remote day; the past weeks of sullen drudgery were wiped away as by an enchantment.

"Yes, I know," she said, slowly seating herself upon the stone and looking downward into her lap. "Father has been working you awfully hard."

"It isn't that," he murmured, standing over her. "It's the loneliness."

She lifted her glance. The hunger in his eyes touched her like naked want. She moved her head sadly from side to side in token of her heart's regret.

"Father's way," she all but whispered; "that is what I want to — apologize for."

"Oh, you needn't do that," he laughed almost joyously, "now that I know you had no hand in it. I did feel rather like a stray dog whom nobody wanted — but," he abruptly asked, "did you know I was up here?" And the next instant he cursed his stupid egotism for asking so foolish a question of a girl.

She glanced at his eyes for an instant and then shook her head emphatically, — up and down.

Whereat they both laughed deliciously and the silent grove by the spring was suddenly filled with quivering music and magic.

"Oh, Lord," he exclaimed. "Why didn't I have sense enough to come up here before?"

"Why — didn't you?" she asked softly, with eyes arch and laughter-filled that set his pulses dancing.

"Wonder is," he cried in delighted amazement, "how I had sense enough to play truant and come up here now."

"I had been hoping you would — so I could tell you," she answered simply.

Tell him what? He did not ask. Anything. He did not care. She had been hoping he would come here at the very time when suddenly out of a clear sky he had resolved to come.

"Telepathy, I think they call that," he interpreted laughingly.

"Yes — but it takes so long to work. I have been trying for days and days to — to make you think of coming up here when I was here — here on this stone."

"This stone," he murmured, unashamed now at the tenderness his voice assumed. "Do you know, just before you came, I had been thinking that one — that I could make this place my home? I know the reason I felt that way now. I'm going to call this the wishing stone."

"Oh, that's out of Barrie," she cried, with laughing triumph.

"Is it?" he said. "I don't care, I never read it anywhere. But that's what I'm going to call it all the same — the Wishing Stone."

"That's very sweet," she said. "And what were you wishing for?" demurely.

Her delicately tinted face under the white leghorn hat, a soft radiance against the white of her simple frock, suddenly assumed to his eyes a beauty that differed saliently from the beauty of any other girl or woman he had ever seen. Strangely something like awe visited him. With the inherent modesty that oddly enough swept his young egotism aside at times, he felt that she was remote and beyond his reach, like a star.

"I was wishing," he answered her slowly, "for some way of getting away from this island——"

"I don't wonder at all," she broke in soberly. "I am very sorry——" and he hated to see her face clouding over.

"——But I shall never wish that again," he added. He experienced an intense desire to touch the hand lying in her lap, the hem of her dress, but it was a desire purely chivalrous, almost the desire of a worshipper toward a goddess.

On a sudden she startled him by putting out her hand. After an instant of inexplicable hesitation he enclosed the small white hand in both of his own. Their gaze hung together for a second, then she softly withdrew her hand.

"We are friends — real friends — aren't we?" she spoke in a way that seemed light to him for so solemn a moment.

"Friends?" he repeated. He had no words for emendation of that simple term, though his lonely heart was charged and surcharged with volumes.

"Well, then," she continued gaily, "you must let me give you some advice." He was intensely reluctant for that magical moment to dissolve into mere conversation, but he nodded his head in vigorous affirmation.

"First of all," she pursued eagerly, "let me tell you about my father. He is not as hard as he seems." Her

father was not the subject nearest to Roderic's heart, but he listened to her intently.

"Father has had a great deal of disappointment," she continued, "and hardships and unhappiness; and he's come to dislike most men. That is why he has made his home here on the island, as far away from the world as he could possibly get."

"Don't you like it here?" he queried.

"Oh, I! What do I matter? But I must tell you —— You see, father was a sea captain. He loves the sea. But — he had an accident. He lost his ship. He was one of the best captains his firm ever had. They were an English firm in Liverpool. But when a man loses a ship, they're very hard on him — as though it were his fault — as though any captain would want to lose his ship! They never offered him another ship. And father was too proud to go to other firms in England — and have to tell that he lost his last ship — with a lot of explanations — don't you see?"

"Of course I do!" If only, he prayed inwardly, nothing would come to interrupt her!

"Well, it rather broke him up. He is very sensitive. And he knew about this island," she pursued. "Very few people know about it, although islands in this part of the world, whatever they are, belong to the French. Father went to the French authorities and got permission or a concession, or whatever it is, to work this island — for copra and shell, you know. And they were very nice, the French — they let him have it — it was uninhabited, you see, and so small. They even made him magistrate of it!" And she laughed at the bombastic grotesqueness of the word and the office when applied to this pin's point of land.

"He doesn't get awfully rich here," she proceeded, still smiling pensively, "but we can live here as we do. He

brought my mother here and me when I was only a tiny baby. We didn't live here all the year — only about eight or nine months. And father used to bring natives to work — and then when the work was done, we'd go back and live in Papeete or even in Hawaii, for the rest of the year, until it was time to come back. He seemed content here, poor father — though I've never seen him really happy. My mother ——"

And then abruptly she paused. He strained his ears to determine whether it was the sound of any one approaching that had suddenly arrested her speech. Perfect stillness, however, reigned all about. The faint breeze had fallen absolutely dead. The foliage overhead hung motionless and the broad sheathlike banana leaves drooped still. His intuition then correctly suggested to him that the mention of her mother was the cause of her sudden silence. He waited without speaking.

"I think I ought to tell you," she began again, "about my mother." She lowered her head and appeared a shade paler to his eyes. "That will help make you understand father better." Again she paused, and he glanced away from her in sympathy with her apparent difficulty.

"Mother never liked this place," she resumed. "She was heaps younger than father." She hesitated and her faltering was painful to him, because it was revealed to him clearly that this part of the narative was painful to her. He was feeling singularly at one with her.

"One of those years, when we were at Hawaii, I was ailing. I was about nine years old. It was decided that my mother and I were not to come here that year. We stayed in a little bungalow at Waikiki, so as to be near to doctors. I was getting better and I remember my mother being so happy, singing to herself all day long. People used to come to see us; American naval officers were always coming up. She was so beautiful!"

"Like her daughter," Roderic interposed huskily.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed sadly. "She was really beautiful — and so alive! And one of the naval officers fell in love with her," she breathed with an agonizing effort, "and she with him. And when father came back," she all but whispered hurriedly, "he found it out — mother told him — and he — Oh, it was terrible, they both suffered so, and father was so wild and I couldn't do anything. And mother fell ill — and died in a few days. She didn't want to live."

Allene's lips quivered and the tears welled from her eyes. She could not speak. She covered her face.

Roderic sat in a very anguish of torture, unable to help her, unable to move even, full of wild longing to take her in his arms and to comfort her as he remembered in a flash his own mother, now dead, comforting him when he was a child. All his emotions were suspended except the one emotion of an overflowing affection for this girl who now suddenly seemed ineffably near and dear to him.

"Oh, don't do that — please don't ——" broke from his dry throat hoarsely. But he proceeded no further.

"Oh, I am quite all right — now — it's over ——" She suddenly shone upon him through her tears like an April rainbow, and he marvelled at her power of control, for his own eyes were dim and salty. "I didn't mean to be a baby," she smiled tremulously. "Well, father brought me back here — and except for my two years at school in Edinburgh — that is when I was coming back with Captain Flitch — I have always been here — and I suppose always shall be. But don't you see," she continued eagerly, "that father has had some reasons to be —— the way he is? He always says he hates Englishmen and Yankees — but he's pretty fine underneath, all the same. But he does want managing, I know that.

He can make it pretty hard for people about him. Bruce is about the only man he has any confidence in — because he can do anything he likes with Bruce."

The question in Roderic's mind as to who and what Bruce was, that would ordinarily have leaped uppermost, now in the face of the girl's intimate and throbbing revelation, sank into the background of his brain. He felt himself athrill with sympathy, possessed of a mighty force, altruistic, protective, intimately tender.

Over all the web of circumstance and personality, hers and his own, shone a sweet, a radiant glow from a new and different heaven. For the first time in all his own vicissitudes, roamings and fortunes, he felt himself lifted from the workaday pathways of life into the beautiful uplands of Romance. Romance, a fitful emotion, a wandering and erratic fragrance in life, now for the first time completely permeated him and he felt the sheer business of existence changed to a novel and gleaming richness, to a high and soul-filling adventure. A new immediacy took hold of his mind and senses. Everything seemed to date from that hour. He felt himself gripping upon life with a strangely firmer hold. All reality seemed to begin with and to be steeped in that brimming wine of romance.

"I must go now," she murmured gently. "Father is sure to notice my being so long away. He was dozing — he sleeps so badly at night."

There was a multitude of things he desired to say, of questions to ask her. But nothing of practical importance seemed to count in the light of the one impalpable, indefinable fact of warm intimacy with Allene. Her wish was supreme in the light of the great gift she had bestowed, of the favor by which she had changed a world of bitterness to an exhilarating bright existence, — of the character, the personality she had

revealed. He felt a surge of wild gratitude because she had suddenly changed him to another person. By making him her friend and confidant she had raised him, he dimly felt even then, to a high pinnacle, above himself.

Impulsively he took both her hands in his from the lap in which they were resting, raised and warmly kissed them. He had never done such a thing in his life before and, when he had read of it, he had inwardly felt contempt at the mawkishness of it. But it seemed wonderfully natural now, like her own candid naturalness. Alene leaped up in a laughing confusion, a faint flush mounting to her cheeks.

"I only want to ask you — one thing — a great favor," he stammered. "Will you let me see you and talk to you sometimes — as often as you possibly can — if only for a few minutes? That —— that ——" he hesitated, "will make — life worth living!" She stood silent for a moment, looking directly into his eyes.

"Perhaps —— perhaps I could manage it," she answered slowly, thoughfully, while his heart was bounding in his breast, in his very ear drums. "But — I hardly know how just now."

"Do you think Akura ——" he suggested, "might be able ——?"

"Oh, yes!" she interrupted positively. "Akura will know —— and she will be delighted. She likes you." And her shy smile thrilled him like an electric charge. "But she had better not know —— officially — so far as you are concerned." He stared in astonishment at what seemed to him positively unheard-of resource in this inexperienced, isolated girl. He had yet to learn of the quickness of woman's wit for the end near to her heart.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she announced with grave decision; "I shall write a little note the day before —— and put it under the — the Wishing Stone here by the

spring —— and then if you are here," she added shyly — " why, then we can talk."

" And you'll say about what time you'll be here? "

" Oh, of course! " she said with all her natural gayety. " Now I must run." He seized her hand swiftly. Hurriedly she returned his pressure and in a moment was hastening away toward the bougainvillea arch between the two trees, that seemed designed to crown her.

Once she was hidden by the foliage a vast loneliness fell upon Roderic. It was as though the curtain of life were rung down and only the pervasive solitude of a solitary world remained. All nature was there, lustrous and fairylike as before. He gazed about dully and saw it all about him, yet his eyes saw nothing but emptiness. A chill feeling of despair touched his heart. Hastily he climbed a coco palm so that he might catch the last glimpse of her as she descended the slope. Perched precariously among the soft green branches above the nut cluster he watched her white figure, slowing up as she neared home, glancing this way and that, as though returning from an ordinary ramble. His heart throbbingly followed her. At last she was past the cane brake and wandering through the garden patches, seemingly oblivious of all that had gone before. She was finally lost to his view on the veranda. He turned sadly away, gazing about the island, to all the extent of the horizon. Suppose he saw a sail approaching, a ship standing fairly in toward the island — the thought came like a faint increasing phosphorescence to his brain — would he signal it frantically, as once he had thought he would, in a wild desire to be taken off? With a strange shock at his own inexplicable nature, he realized that emphatically his answer, without a shadow of regret, was No! And then almost simultaneously he descried a white sail gleaming against the intense blue of the ocean in the direction from

which his own raft — how long ago it was! — had been cast upon the thundering milk-white surf of the reef. The vessel from his eyrie looked inordinately small. The flapping of the canvas as she drew nearer told him that she had scracely a cupful of wind, scarcely enough for steerageway.

"Bruce —— I shouldn't wonder," he said to himself, and his heart grew unaccountably heavier. "Wish I knew the sort of bird he is!" He watched the little vessel for a few minutes, fascinated, and then slid down the rough stem. Briskly he made his way on the right of the stream as he had come, through the breadfruit grove across the creek, past the gray guavas and the coco and garden plantations, by the native houses. "Yoranna!" brown men, women, girls and children sang out from their birdlike houses or from shaded spots near them. He returned their greetings gayly with a wave of the hand and hurried on. They told themselves no doubt that he would learn to hurry less under a hot sun as time went on.

To his relief he found the shed precisely as he had left it and the beach empty. The surface of the lagoon was like an opal. Then nonchalantly he walked toward the birdcage near the house. His food was waiting for him in a wooden bowl covered with leaves.

"Have you cleaned up the store shed?" came in a rasping voice from the veranda. Old Galbraith was standing erect and rigid, facing him. He rose and came out.

"Yes, sir," he said. "All done."

"H'm," the old man grunted as though casting about in his mind.

"I saw a sail to the nor'west of us," Roderic added, with a sudden feeling of kindness toward Allene's father flooding him. "I shouldn't wonder if that were Bruce."

"Mr. McClung, sir!" rapped the old man. "His name is Mr. McClung to you. How did you come to see a sail from your place on the beach?" Excitement now possessed him.

"I climbed a tree, sir!" was the ready answer.

"That's the most enterprising thing I've known you to do since you're here," shouted the old man. "Yes, it must be he. Go call the men," he cried hoarsely. "Tell them Tapena Bruce is coming. Tell them to man a boat and go out to meet him. Damnation!—— Don't stare! You've got your orders; be quick about it! You need not go along with them. You stay on the beach!"

The one thing uppermost in Roderic's mind beneath this shower of irritability was:

"Lucky he didn't ask me which tree I climbed."

CHAPTER XI

THE LOVERS

The arrival of Bruce, rather than stirring events, kept Roderic completely unnoticed, in the background. If the surprise of the newcomer at finding a new white man on the island was great, he dissembled it successfully and took Roderic's presence very nearly for granted. He had heard nothing in Papeete of the foundering of the *Alice* nor had any survivors appeared there. If he had any curiosity touching the castaway, he meant to satisfy it elsewhere.

For days Roderic, together with two or three native lads, worked at shifting the stores from the little schooner to the store shed, arranging and packing, and Bruce gave a great impression of preoccupation, — coming and going, giving orders, directing here, there and everywhere. He was of those who mask an absence of warmth and good nature by a constant factitious smile made by the muscles of the eyes. The tendency to languor, the gold and peacock-blue dazzle of the waterside, seemingly made no slightest impression upon him. He was busy, alert, grave and bustling.

His rather flattish, somewhat pockmarked face, shaven and small-eyed, with a nondescript thickish nose, seemed to betray something wanting, a something incomplete. It was the type of face that demanded full lips, and that man's lips were thin. His manner and movements were brisk and his voice possessed a certain forced resonance,

and always conveyed a sense of artificiality. He bustled and smiled coldly and seemed as one overcharged with importance.

Saturday was the day of Bruce's return and on Sunday morning, to Roderic's astonishment, he conducted a religious service in the hut called the chapel.

"A missionary!" said Roderic to himself in amazement and followed the service, which was in both native and English, with a sort of dissolving consternation. A prayer was offered for those saved from the perils of the sea and Roderic felt intuitively certain that the celebrant of the service had only himself in mind during that thanksgiving. Whether professional or amateur missionary, Bruce McClung in his complex rôle offered a type baffling and hitherto unknown to Roderic's experience. If, as he unconsciously felt, this man were to prove an added antagonist, he was at a loss how to encounter him. Thus far, however, Bruce's notice of him had been less than scant. For Bruce clung to the Galbraiths and seemed to be forever accidentally at Allene's side, a phase which just as unpremeditatedly she seemed bent upon correcting.

From his birdcage house, where he lay for hours on his bamboo couch staring into the barred gloom, from the garden, from points on the beach, Roderic's gaze kept forever turning toward the house, toward the trio of whites upon the veranda, with gloomy solitary eyes and an aching hungering heart, feeling the brand of the pariah upon him and smarting under the sting. Allene, who had for a magical moment given him of her friendship, seemed to have withdrawn it without a trace. No overt hostile act is needed to produce hatred in another, and the insult of indifference can rankle more burningly than billingsgate. Cold neglect can brew a cold fury as deadly as any hotter emotion.

Late afternoon of that Sunday, after a swim in the

lagoon, Roderic sauntered away through the garden in the lee of the fragrant, trellised walk that ran nearly the whole length of it and up on the hill toward the spring. There, at any rate, he could be in absolute solitude out of sight of the house that now spelled sharp pain to him. As he skirted the canebrake and began to move up the slope, it occurred to him in the bitterness of his heart: Suppose he climbed the tall palm at the spring and sighted a ship standing directly for the island, would he not hail it with joy and board it, if he could, with eagerness, and leave that accursed island? Only a faint, an exceeding faint dash of uncertainty clouded this stirring hope within him. Allene had been kind to him, and the thought of going fell heavily upon his spirit; but in any case, he told himself, it was ridiculous. No ships were coming here. If only there were some sign or message from Allene! But that, he told himself, was equally impossible. How could she have eluded those two dried sharks in the house?

Nevertheless, the first thing he did after passing the bougainvillea arch and reaching the spring was to insert his hand with tremulous eagerness under the rock where Allene's message was to be deposited, if it ever came.

A little dark-golden lizard darted out and startled him to a degree that caused him to jump fully three feet backward. He laughed aloud at himself for a nervous idiot and again felt under the stone. He was even more surprised when his fingers brought forth a small leaf of ruled paper, torn from a memorandum book, bearing the words:

"It is just possible I may be reading here Wednesday about sunset — A. G."

A sharp jet of pleasure in his hungering heart was almost immediately succeeded by a pang of regret at the long delay. But this was soon swept aside by a pulsing

exultation. She, at all events, had not forgotten him. The only person in the house who mattered was thinking of him and regretting his loneliness. And the loneliness and bitterness were promptly forgotten. The thrill of uncertainty, the excitement of conflict quickened his blood and dilated his nostrils.

"I'll have to fight it out on this line," he told himself eagerly and sank down upon what he and Allene had dubbed the Wishing Stone in a very loom of thought shot with the threads of fantastic imaginings. Obstacles that are stone walls to middle-aged reflections are gossamer to the fancies of twenty. Nothing is impossible to the prince in the fairy tale and every youth is to himself a prince. The desire to do something valiant and splendid surged hotly in his veins, to engage these two protagonists in a combat, be it of wit or force; the craving played in his mind like a fountain.

"What could be the meaning of that fellow Bruce's attentions to Allene?" That thought suddenly swept his golden-threaded fantasies with the sharpness and force of a typhoon. That rabbit and — Allene? Why had he thought of it? Why had he not thought of it before? It was preposterous — horrible! And yet, who knew? An inward shudder of repulsion shook him at the thought. He could not entertain blackness. Anyway, in three days he would see her — talk with her — hear her. That was the wonderful prospect before him, full of color and light.

Steadily and silently he worked for the next three days, now under the direction of one of the white men, now under the other's, at tasks the most menial. They seemed plagued and harassed to find work for him. After transferring some kerosene from red barrels brought in the schooner into metal containers in the oil shed, Bruce actually ordered him to clean and fill half a score of lamps. To them he was still the sailor before

the mast and no work was too menial. With compressed lips, however, swallowing offense, Roderic kept on grimly, his mind illumined by an inner glow of resolve and purpose. Wednesday seemed the longest day in his experience. Late that afternoon he understood why Allene had set Wednesday for the tryst.

At sunset there was to be singing in the *himene* house or chapel for the natives, whose emotional natures were stirred and delighted by rhythmic shouting. There were few young men on the island, Roderic had noted. Virtually all the men were settled, middle-aged, if not elderly. The problem of labor had evidently been worked out with care. Younger men and women, too, if restlessness seized upon them, were given opportunities to go elsewhere into a more exciting life. The need of the island was tranquillity.

There was a great washing and bathing in the lagoon toward sundown. Men and women in their *pareus* came running down to the beach under the palms and *purao* trees to immerse and cleanse themselves before the assembly.

Orui, the gnarled, mahogany-colored overseer of the coconut plantation, a skilled copra maker, came swimming toward Roderic and chuckled softly. The boom of the surf and the cries of bosun and frigate birds out on the strip of reef were the only sounds of nature except for the chattering and laughing of the natives on the beach farther toward the right. He had worked much with the old man at the copra-shed and had become pleasantly friendly.

"Ah, it is good to live," murmured Orui, who had smatterings of a sort of English. "'ill you not sing *himenes* with us to-night?"

"No," said Roderic, eager to get away. "I am weary and must rest."

"You *Papalagi* find work hard in these islands," philosophized Orui. "Yet it is very near to the Garden of Eden that Tapena Bruce tells us about. It would be heaven if man did not love and hate."

"But I neither love nor hate," smiled Roderic, "I only work."

The dark old man scanned his features narrowly.

"If you don't," he finally uttered sententiously, "then you soon will. Men cannot live without loving and hating. Remember old Orui is your friend."

Roderic laughed and scuttled up the beach to where his clothes lay under an aoa tree. But once alone he paused. Why did old Orui say that? What did he know? His one desire now, however, was to ascend to the spring where he wildly hoped Allene was "reading."

The amber light of the sun that was now visibly racing away to the westward beyond the island, the voices of the lagoon in front of him as he dressed, suddenly presented one of those revelations of beauty that at times floods us and strikes us dumb and still. Like a dreaming boy, filled with his own plans and imaginings, he pulled on his shirt and paused with a sandal poised in one hand, gazing intently at nothing, — at everything. The entire universe seemed to be compressed in the space behind his eyeballs and all that was far away and all that was near at hand were simultaneously present to him. The garden at home, at Adams Rock, the lamplit living room, the voyage out in the *Alice,* the shipwreck, the garden and plantations of this island, Motu, as the natives called it, were all encompassed in this sudden burst of soul-vision.

He knew not how long he stood there rapt, silent, wondrously alert, yet stone-still like a statue. Probably no more than a few seconds of time had actually passed. But it seemed a lifetime, an eternity. He laughed aloud

to himself as he emerged and proceeded feverishly with his dressing. A rush of wild joy and primitive energy came to him. The world and the men to be encountered seemed like so much chaff before his flooding strength. With the keenness of the savage, instinctively dodging in and out among tree trunks and vegetation, to avoid being seen, he hastened to the spring.

The very earth he was treading seemed strangely nearer and more friendly to his hurrying feet. The great, elaborately patterned leaves of the breadfruit trees, the rustle of the artus, the feathery tops of the palms, the very ferns that ordinarily have a cold mysterious air seemed more warmly welcoming. He approached the spring, whose broidery of vegetation appeared now dim and crepuscular, with a beating heart. He was deliciously startled to find himself suddenly standing before Allene.

She was wearing a frock of dark-blue voile instead of her customary white and she was hatless. Her face, framed in her massive golden-brown hair, resembled an oval miniature upon which an artist had lavished tender pains. She looked up at him smiling yet with a look of sweet concern in her eyes.

"I am a little late," were Roderic's first words, "I had to get rid of paraffin on my hands and arms. I hope you haven't been here long?"

"Oh, yes, hours," and she put out her little hand. "I have been reading. I couldn't have come away later — when they come back to the house."

"I see," he said, still holding her hand. "You are watched too."

"I suppose old people are like that." She withdrew her hand softly and moved toward the stone. "It's hard for them to remember how younger people feel."

"But Bruce — McClung," he blurted out the name against his will. "He isn't old?"

"Yes, he is," she returned with energy. "It's just because he is more like an old man that father trusts him so."

He had it in mind to say something fiery and sharp concerning Bruce, but her words suddenly seemed to nullify him, as though a pen had been run through his name. A sense of deep relief, of lightness, came to his heart.

"Well, this island is a small world," he told her gaily. "If they represent all the old age here, why, we are all there is to the youth of the place. And youth, I believe, always wins — in the end."

His light-heartedness seemed to stir and stimulate her. Instantly she caught his gayety.

"It's very sensible of you to take it that way," she exclaimed. "I know only too well that they have been treating you shamefully these past days. And it hurts me to see it. They feel, I suppose, that it's their island and you have broken in on them from outside. But as long as you don't mind — so you understand it isn't ——"

"——Isn't you?" he caught her up with a laugh. "If it only were you! I could work ten times as hard for you and not mind it. That would be different. But it is different. It's different, anyway!"

The starlike light from her deep grey eyes streamed like a magic emanation into his and shook him.

"I am so glad," she murmured. "It's only a few months," she added. "And if you feel that way, they will pass quickly and — you won't be miserable."

Roderic could have sworn a faint sigh escaped her, as she turned away toward the darker grove to the right of the bougainvillea arch.

And then, on a sudden, the energy and the courage of half an hour earlier on the beach came surging back into his heart. All the physical, intent alertness came with

it, but the controlling power of his mind seemed suddenly suspended. His words came of themselves, instinctively:

"But I don't want to go away," he uttered hurriedly yet clearly. "Not as long as you are here!" And his breath came parched and choking behind the words.

She was silent for a space. Yet he could hear her quick gasp and see the sudden rising and falling of her bosom. For one instant of doubt and troubled fear that he had hurt her he sat gazing at her in silence, but the mad throbbing in his pulses gave him no respite for contemplation. He seized her hands and held them unresisting in his own fevered ones.

"Shouldn't I have said that?" he murmured hotly, his eyes searching her face. "Did I offend you?"

She shook her head slowly and turned toward him a radiance so gentle, so marvelous, that the whole glade about them seemed to be illumined as by a soft new light.

"No," she whispered. "It was the sweetest thing that any one has ever said to me. But——"

Roderic, however, upon hearing these words, was not sufficiently master of himself to let her proceed with any objections. New and strange words in a torrent came rushing out from his lips.

"Allene, my darling, I love you — I love you — don't you see, sweetheart?" He drew her forcefully to him and with his arm clasping her slender figure tightly, poured out his love. "From the first minute I saw you, you just seemed to take hold of me. And from a boy I became a man. You were always in my mind — inside my heart. Do you remember how you looked at me in the harbor of Papeete when you were leaving the *Alice?* I wanted to kneel down to you and to beg your forgiveness for the rude, brutal way I spoke to you on the voyage. I couldn't get you out of my thoughts." She moved in his arms gently, but he only held her closer.

"Don't move — I must tell you," he continued in a passionate tumult. "Why do you suppose I shipped on the *Alice* homeward bound? Because she was to call at Papeete — and you got off at Papeete — that's where I last saw you. And I spent all my shore leave making inquiries about your island; I was afraid I would never see you again. Then the shipwreck — it was Fate brought me to you — don't you see, my darling — Allene?" He breathed her name tenderly against her hair and abruptly his torrent of words ceased.

The girl was motionless and he felt a sudden shame in holding her thus imprisoned without any response on her part. Slowly he released her.

"But you don't care — that way," he muttered shamefacedly. "I didn't — I shouldn't ——" and he was miserably silent as he kneeled beside her. He had a hungry desire to rise to heights before her. Yet he was suddenly swept by a wave of misery and humility. How had he dared? He was very young.

Then gently she lifted up her hands on a level with his shoulders, gazed at him for a moment untellably eloquent and clasping her hands behind his neck, drew him gently and kissed him upon the lips.

"Allene — my darling," he murmured in a wild ecstasy. "I may leave you — but it will be when I am dead!" His resolve was as sealed at that instant as a decree of high Heaven.

And no one, he knew, no one in the wide world, in all the populous lands and distant oceans, had ever loved as he loved this fragrant girl in his arms. "Did you ever think of me at all?" he breathed against her eyes, "before I came?"

"If thinking and wishing could bring you here ——" she answered, tightening her arms about him, "then I felt sure you would come! I thought and thought about

you — I hardly knew why — it seemed so strange — ridiculous — a total stranger. And yet — oh, it was impossible ——"

"You, too!" he cried in a delirium of bliss. "Then, by God, it's a miracle! Do you suppose it could ever have happened before in this world — shipwreck and all?" He felt himself to be saliently reasonable — not to be swerved by emotion.

"That was the first thing I thought of," she whispered, "when I found you here. Oh, I prayed half that night!" Angels to him were pale phantasms beside this divine girl. All beauty, all love, cosmic, endless, lay clasped that moment in his arms. He was a Titan, a superman!

In a rapt illumined silence they held each other for a space, an epoch of time, and only the rustle of the fronds and leaves and the distant voice of the surf were intermittently audible in midst of the beating of their own hearts.

"And I came limping, shipwrecked, cutting my way through the chaparral with a knife — remember?" he murmured, marveling "because I had to get to you!"

"And something drew me to come here that day," she whispered against his breast; "something pulled and drew me so that I could not, could not resist!"

"She is mine!" the fierce pulses in his brain told him; "mine — my own!"

In later years Roderic had occasion to recall those unspoken words in his triumphant exulting heart far more vividly than any of the spoken ones. At that instant, however, the thin-lipped visage of Bruce McClung rose before him, accompanied by a sharp imperious pang of mingled contempt and resentment. He wanted to say something to Allene touching McClung, to ask her questions, but he could not bring himself to break the en-

chantment of the moment; the name somehow would not pass the portals of his lips.

A call in a low, soft yet penetrating voice suddenly sounded in the forest — quite near them.

"Au-e! Au-e!"

He leaped to his feet like a startled stag. Dusk had fallen. He could see no one.

Allene also rose from the stone to her feet. She uttered something quick and reassuring in the native.

"It is Akura," she murmured, turning to Roderic. "I must leave you. I must hurry back. Father is missing me. But I love you — I love you," she breathed hurriedly. "And I'll come again. I don't know when. You'll find a message — Sunday perhaps. Good-by, my — Roderic!" She kissed him quickly and ran down the slope. He did not see Akura at all. That brown lady had the delicacy to remain on the other side of the bougainvillea arch and not intrude upon the lovers.

His first clear recognition of what followed his dream-like interlude with Allene, was when he found himself standing under the most brilliant stars he had ever remembered seeing in the dim abyss of the tropic forest — alone!

The very pain of the discovery seemed incredible. Alone!

CHAPTER XII

THE REASON FOR BRUCE

The next morning, in the ardent blue-and-gold perfection of the eternal summer, Roderic felt himself incredibly whole and happy. He was like a creature that could fly, so light and airy he seemed to himself, and yet solid, foursquare and compact, as though he could go through a stone wall. The palms nodded, the lagoon sparkled, and the surf on the reef was singing familiar songs in deep organ tones. The marvelous tranquillity was so profound that it drew upward from unknown depths within him snatches of poetry, dim and forgotten, and some of them wholly strange, his own.

He was working at the copra-shed with Orui and Orui was chattering with an incessant monotonous garrulity. Galbraith himself had ordered him to the work and now the taut old man, disdaining the camp chair that Orui had placed for him, stood rigid and alert, watching the work. The willingness, the energy and the ease with which his uninvited guest addressed himself to his toil of filling and shifting bags with dried copra seemed to make a curious impression upon old Galbraith. He looked on, fascinated, turned away, and watched again. What thoughts were passing through his morose old brain it was difficult to tell. But on a sudden he called out.

"Whitford!"

"Yes, sir," Roderic paused in surprise and gazed directly, nonchalantly, into the old man's eyes.

"Come here," Roderic approached him. "Do you know anything about navigation?" he half snarled. The query was so strange that Roderic could scarcely credit his ears.

"A little — not much, sir," he answered. "I began to work at it a bit on the last voyage of the *Alice*."

"Ah! — Every white man who has got brains enough ought to know something of navigation" —— naveegation, he pronounced it. "Stop in at the house this evening and I'll lend you a book or two."

"Thank you, sir," Roderic answered mechanically, without thinking. Then at once a hot flush passed over his entire body, and he wondered whether he could have heard aright. What was the reason for this sudden unbending on the part of the rigid old man? Could it be that he knew — something — anything about — Allene and himself? Could Akura have told? But of course that was impossible — unbelievable. If he knew!

"Go back to your work!" snapped the old man. Roderic again glanced at the inscrutable weather-beaten face before him with its innumberable little wrinkles and retreated with alacrity.

"What can be eating the old man?" he said to himself as he attacked the copra bags with even more savage energy. "Wait until he knows!" And still his mind in a tumult revolved round and round that sudden impulse of Galbraith's, endeavoring feverishly to fathom the obscure motives, the strange whim that caused him to take this abrupt interest in the acquirements of his "slave," as Roderic called himself. And that word suddenly gave him a cue. Ah! Perhaps old Galbraith planned to keep him here like the others, a slave of his dominating will, a toiler in his vineyard? And all at once to his restless mood the tiny island, the fixed abode with all the world lost, shed upon his mind a somber

gloom beyond comparison oppressive and dreary, like prison bars. Then supervened the warm and luring image of Allene and the gloom was wiped away like a cobweb. The thought of Allene exerted a sudden pull to this dot of the earth like a powerful magnet and he felt strangely, intimately friendly toward old Galbraith. Whatever his motive, was he not Allene's father? At any rate, at that moment Roderic felt himself a sort of benevolent giant in stature, eight feet tall at least, cunning as Ulysses and a match for all and more than all on the island. From an alien castaway he suddenly felt himself to have become the most favored mortal on the island. The very pores of his skin seemed to exude an endless radiant vitality as his brain and hands worked busily. He was a lover beloved!

In the wistfulness and inexplicable changes of after years, Roderic had occasion to remember vividly the mingled emotions of that brilliant morning on Omotu. A swarm of flattering hopes kept buzzing about his ears and he could scarcely contain his impatience for the evening to come. He saw himself received in equality at last, made much of, deferred to, become an intimate guest of the big house, and all the rest should easily follow. In the past, it occurred to him, he had been too suspicious, too ready to take offense, and this he attributed to his harsh experience at sea that instead of hardening him had made him tender. And floating through his mind came some detached phrases from the Odyssey which he had read the year before he left home:

"I tell thee there is naught else worse than the sea to confound a man, how hardy soever he may be," and again, "For I have been shamefully broken in many waters."

Shamefully broken! That was it. He bathed in the lagoon at the end of the day's work and walked up to

the house through the colonnade of palms with the springy step of a gladdened heart. Amber-colored flames were tinting the western sky; the declining sun, tamed after its dazzling career of the day, could now almost be looked at with the human eye. The tall palms seemed to be balancing their feathery foliage on the slender stems with a magnificent royal poise. It was all as it had been every day, yet infinitely gloriously different. He was going up to the house by invitation of its master.

He walked up the veranda steps with a prouder step than at any time since he had been on the island. No one was visible. He knocked upon the door, but received no answer. He pushed it open.

At the far end of the low-ceiled dim-colored room, at the table upon which a single ray of light seemed to fall as from a clerestory, sat old Galbraith and Bruce McClung, bent and busy over accounts. They had not heard him. His pride of a moment earlier ran out of him like water and crestfallen as after a dishonorable defeat he moved as if to withdraw. But on a sudden the old man, facing toward the door, looked up absently.

"Who's this?" he called out. "What d'ye want?" Bruce also turned and both were now glaring at him as they might at an intruding leper. A horrible sensation of chill shivered down his spine and then a flush of smoking heat mounted to his face and eyes.

"You asked me to come in, sir," he finally mastered himself to stammer, "about some books — on navigation." The old man continued to glare at him for a space. Then——

"I am engaged!" he finally shouted in an exasperated tone. "Can't you see?"

"I — I'm sorry, sir," Roderic answered briskly, feeling utterly disgraced. "I ——" and he was half out of

the door when again old Galbraith shouted, "Wait!" And he rose rigidly and went into an inner room.

Bruce McClung, still staring at him without the change of a muscle, finally informed him that it had been a "beautiful day."

"Yes," murmured Roderic and in his heart at that moment was the overpowering desire to rush upon that fellow with the sleekness and hypocrisy of a household cat, or a supercargo, and dash his head against the floor.

"Are you about to study navigation?" Bruce pursued with suave incredulity, as though he were about to explode with laughter.

"Yes — Mr. Galbraith suggested it," Roderic replied, hating himself for speaking civilly to this animal and determined that this remark should be his last.

"But do you think ——" began McClung and then, changing the form of his words, declared weightily:

"A certain amount of education is necessary."

This time Roderic was sufficiently master of himself to hold his peace.

"You will hardly have time," McClung continued conversationally, with a faint burr to his speech. "Long before you can learn the merest rudiments you will be leaving the island. Not much leisure here," he added, with a thin smile playing upon his thin lips.

Luckily, at that moment Galbraith returned and stalked stiffly toward Roderic with two volumes in his quivering hand. Then he turned his back coldly upon their recipient.

Roderic murmured something, he hardly knew what, and once outside the door he sighed profoundly. The outer air was grateful to his hot face. He leaped down the steps unconsciously and found himself a few moments later, lying upon his bamboo couch in the sheltering gloom of his birdcage, breathing heavily, the books

still clutched in his hand. All the vivid picturing of friendliness, equality and intimacy came back like darts into his heart. All at once he leaped to his feet, threw down the books and shook his fist in the direction of the big house.

Henceforth, he told himself, there was war between him and them!

It is notable that of all the web and welter of thoughts that now kept weaving their mazy pattern through Roderic's brain, there was none of escape, of leaving it all behind him, of flying the contempt and insults of those two men, even if he had the chance. The dominant purpose in his heart was to struggle, to fight them, to win through to a different position in his own esteem if not in theirs. For always there was the radiant face of Allene before him, with the tender pathos that surrounded her. His interests and desires were no longer separable from hers. The question in his mind that night, however, and in the iridescent day that followed, was to what extent would she stand by him, cling to him? He had to own to himself that in some secret hidden corner of his heart he was not absolutely sure of her. Yet with an instinctive feeling, be it of perversity or of loyalty, he thought and planned as though she were part of himself.

He was now working at the most menial of all occupations on the island, burning up the copra shell. The heat was intense and the heavy smoke, repeatedly blown in his face, made his eyes smart and water, so that he worked as one weeping over his task. The sense of degradation at the lowliness of his task before the natives smoldered in him like a slow fire. He, a white man, put to the task of the poorest native or coolie. There were few young people on the island. The handful of natives consisted mostly of settled men and their families.

Nevertheless some of the young, native girls made it, he thought, a point to pass him, to gaze at him with their large liquid eyes and give him a sympathetic "Yoranna."

Nevertheless, his brain never stopped. It raced on with a gathering speed and swiftness. It was not in nature for him to love old Galbraith and Bruce McClung. But he was not wasting time or energy now in hating them. The one object for which his hot brain was straining, was how to triumph over their brutality. And every plan, even the vaguest, included Allene as an integral part of it. There was no burning out of the eye of the Cyclops. He must needs work by ordinary means available on the island, where he was now little better than a convict laborer.

His own eyes burned and his heart also. If only he could see Allene, or at least have some word of her. But nothing came, not so much as a sign. She was invisible as though she had left the island. And though the day was perfect with the same dazzling sunlight, sapphire sky, color and fragrance, yet its magic was dimmed for him. Were all things and people flying and forsaking him? Was he indeed the outcast that he felt? Was it for this that he had fled his too tranquil home, to work like a Solomon Island contract laborer at thirty Chili dollars a year, — without the dollars? The next thing perhaps they would be lashing him, treating him as he had heard of blackbird labor being treated!

No! Instinctively his head shot up high and his nostrils dilated. He must think out his situation coolly. He would go to the spring that evening and sit in silence away from the precincts of these hateful white men and think. There, at any rate, he was himself. If only this island were larger, so that he could flee and lose himself in it, roam the tangled forest, more kindly than these

people, subsist like some Crusoe or savage on fruits and herbs until such a time as he could find rescue! But the few square miles of this so-called high island were almost as open as any ring-shaped atoll, some of the characteristics of which it partook. In any case, however, at the spring was refuge.

The dip in the lagoon at the end of that longest of days seemed to possess an unusual significance. It seemed to cleanse him inwardly of some of the sooty, sordid emotions that had been tarnishing his soul almost as much as it cleansed the outer grime and soothed the blood.

Mechanically, unconscious of a sense of taste, he devoured his supper which came, as always, in one dish, — fried bananas, the usual vegetables, fish wrapped in ti leaves, a mango fruit, a jug of water and nothing else. It was not Akura that brought it, but a limping native youth, unfit for hardier labor, who worked as a sort of general coolie about the house. They gave each other "Yoranna," but had no further speech. "My next job," thought Roderic sardonically, "to valet the woodpile and eat with the natives in the cook house." He now remembered the word "*incommunicado*" in connection with prisoners and understood its meaning.

Once he had bolted his food he left the birdcage and with seeming carelessness sauntered up to the spring.

There are moods in which thought is so frantic as it beats violently against the hard and narrow boundaries of the skull, that for all its activity no channel or trace of it remains in the brain. All that walk of his up the slope was filled with such wild cogitations, so that when he found himself sitting on the slope by the spring, he scarcely knew how he had come there. He remembered leaving his house and now he was here. The intervening space was a blank. But now, in the leafy gloom of the one spot on the island that held associations of

happiness, he breathed more freely and reflected more clearly.

"They are trying to devil me into doing something shameful and rotten," he told himself, "something that would stamp me as the thing they are trying to make me, a low type of beach comber, a pariah and an outcast. In that way all they can do against me and more would seem too good for me." But — before whom? he asked himself. This was such a tiny world. He was not such a fool, however, as to fail to apprehend that the world is all of one texture, macrocosm and microcosm. They would degrade him before the natives, before Allene, before their own black consciences. And the youthful heart in him, in its first clash with life and the obscure tortuous motives that move it, bitterly cried out in rebellion, "Why? Why?"

The past came slipping back to him, as the past always will in moments of weakness. He saw the home of his boyhood and the well-ordered life made for him by others, ignoring his silent inner life, to be sure, but punctiliously careful of his outer. The chill abstraction of his father, the purblind fussiness of his stepmother, the great tranquillity, the absence of the sting and zest of life, now troubled him with a melancholy self-pity. He had been, in a manner, surrounded. It had been a dull existence. Here he was alone, despised if not suspected; for all the fairness and innocence of his intentions treated almost as a convict. To them he was a thief come out of the night.

But abruptly he threw back his shoulders and cast off his creeping mood of self-pity. He had thirsted for life, he told himself, and life was meeting him more than halfway. The sting and zest of it! It was here and now. The past, he dimly felt, only dragged at the wheels of

existence while seeming to lighten them. He must meet his problems and fate in the spirit of the present.

Those two men had no desire for visitors to their small world and here was one thrust upon them. He did not believe he could behave in that manner to any human being, but no matter of that. It was still some months before the schooner would take him back to Papeete, and in the meanwhile —— Ah, if he could only consult with Allene! He experienced a sharper and more poignant longing for her than was constantly with him and it seemed he could not bear another hour to pass without seeing her.

And that sharp longing seemed to intensify and solidify the loneliness that encompassed him. The island became a solitary wilderness, remote, alien, and in every shadow of the surrounding jungle was lurking a strange hostility. As the darkness descended sharply with the soft caressing quality of its mystery, he felt himself stark and alone against a velvet curtain that hid unknown threats and menace.

On a sudden his uneasy reverie was broken as by a glow of soft light.

Allene was approaching — Allene, with a footfall soft as the night itself, without a sound. He leaped to his feet and seized her outstretched hands. The exquisite tenderness in her eyes he could see, even in that newborn darkness, and at once all the solitude and menace receded into nothingness.

"Allene — darling," he murmured, as he drew her to him with trembling arms, and a host of foolish words that he did not know he could utter rippled forth in a cascade from his lips. The alien quality of his life was an absurd dream. A deep happiness now dwelt in his heart. This was home!

Tacitly they moved to the flat stone by the spring,

and as she sat close to him with his arms about her, a kindling flame in his blood seemed to burn out all petty fears and sordid tribulations. How splendidly brave and strong he suddenly felt standing beside Allene. What a strange, winelike potency that girl possessed!

To be bereft of her now was less conceivable to him than death itself. But Allene was silent and serious and that troubled him.

"Tell me, darling," he paused, "what's wrong? Why are you so quiet — so sad?" Allene sighed deeply.

"Oh, they have been so cruel and horrid to you — it makes me ill," she sadly murmured. Then with a sudden passion she quivered in his arms. "I can't bear it — ah, I can't bear it!" And his cheek was suddenly wet with her hot tears.

"Oh, that ——" he muttered soothingly, "that's nothing!" And he was truthfully sincere in declaring the triviality of that which a few hours or a few epochs before had made him suffer and smart so poignantly. Was not Allene close to him — in his arms?

"Nothing!" she murmured dazedly. "Why, what else is there? It's the most dreadful thing of all — awful!"

And now he understood that no slight or insult on the part of the two hostile white men weighed down his heart one-hundredth part so much as the words of Bruce McClung about his "leaving the island." This trivial jot of land was now the world, and the threat of expulsion from it — and from the girl beside him — was the threat of abysmal doom. He could not help marvelling for an instant at the sudden bright clarity of what a little before had been so chaotically dark and confused.

The burning stars overhead, preternaturally large and brilliant, seemed to flash down a message of confidence and truth. There must be no half-measures, no conceal-

ments with a girl like Allene. He must tell her everything and plan everything with her.

"What else is there?" he repeated finally. "There is really only one thing, darling. All the rest is of no account." And with the utterance of those words which seemed abruptly to nullify the sordid persecutions and the petty spites of Galbraith and Bruce, he felt with a delighted shock of astonishment that they were actually nullified. They were suddenly small and remote, insignificant. The oneness with Allene, so close and warm beside him, part of him, made him tower inwardly and outwardly above them while they had shrivelled to the size of hornets.

And never again did he lose this position as regarded these two men, the position that love had suddenly bestowed upon him.

He thrilled with the immensity of the beauty of that which he could not have then expressed in words to save his soul. Tenderly, as though afraid that surge of newborn strength might crush her fragility, he pressed Allene to him with the finest emotion he had yet experienced in life.

"Only one thing is troubling me," he spoke with a new tremulous confidence against her lips. "It was when Bruce spoke to-day about — of my leaving the island."

"Oh! — no, no! That couldn't be!" she gasped as if wrung by pain.

"That may be months off. But months or years, that is the one thing I cannot face. I can't leave you now, darling, and I can't go without you."

"No, no!" she uttered in a stifled cry and her arms tightened about his neck. "I'd rather die!" He thrilled from head to foot in the glowing pride of her great love.

"The question is," he pursued with hardly achieved calmness, "what can we do about it. I only know I

cannot leave you. I can understand your father feeling the way he does," he suddenly added, with something hot and sharp rankling inside him. "But why has Bruce this terrific anxiety to get me away?"

"Oh, Roderic dear," she cried low and piteously, "don't you understand? He — he wants to marry me."

A shock like a sudden blow across the chest struck speech in him silent for an instant. A chill fury seemed to fill all the spaces of his bosom.

"Marry — you!" he finally cried out aghast. "That — Bruce?" The pretensions of Bruce for marriage with Allene — his Allene, that he had dreamed of, carried in his heart for an eternity — suddenly appeared as the most revolting, monstrous, sacrilegious thing he had ever heard of! Whatever he might have fancied or suspected heretofore, the stark fact now bold and naked before him seemed like some hideous deformity that sent a shudder through him. It was unthinkable! Then a rush of blood that lent a tinge of red even to the dark tenebrous tangle of the forest about him shook him with a fiery rage.

"Marry *you?*" He repeated with clenched jaws that would scarcely allow him to speak, so hard-gripped were they by anger. "I'll kill him first!"

"Oh, no, dear — don't say that!" she murmured, but she clung to him even more passionately than before. "We must find some other way."

"Other way — other way," he repeated mechanically. "What other way is there, when no ships ever come here — and they have the schooner — and the whole island is about four square miles?"

"It is larger than that," she mournfully corrected him. "You see, it is shaped like a bird flying. You came over the narrow part of it. But out there and she waved her hand gently to the right and left, it stretches quite a way. There are white cliffs at the tips — and caves."

The geography of the island, however, even when imparted by Allene, had only a perfunctory interest for him at that moment.

"But tell me, Allene," he demanded feverishly, "does your father know that he — that Bruce — wants to marry you?" He could barely utter the hateful words.

"Oh, goose that you are, dear; of course he knows! It was father that arranged it. Can you imagine me wanting it?"

"But how could he?" he exclaimed passionately with the unconscious egotism of youth and love that reduced the rival to a creature of the slime.

"Don't you see, Roderic? he thinks Bruce is safe. He is a connection — of the family — and father thinks he has such a strong, steady character. And that I am light and fanciful — as he thinks my mother was. I am very much like her. And Bruce is safe — he studied for the ministry, you see — and — in that way — he thinks I'll be safe. He brought Bruce out here for that purpose. Taught him navigation and everything — so he can hand over the island to him. Bruce has a strange influence on him. That is why they are so beastly to you — afraid you might spoil it all."

"The island and — and you! My God!" he cried with sudden suppressed vehemence. "So that's the combination we have to fight!"

"I told you that I'll sooner die than marry him."

Her words possessed a wonderful power and exercised a marvelous effect. The mist before his eyes cleared away. His blood seemed quickly to take on a new and a steadier rhythm.

"Very well," he said, "then they'll have to carry me off the island. You and I belong to each other. Don't we, darling?" he bent his eyes to hers and held her gently, with great tenderness.

Her answer was her soft warm lips upon his.

Allene's kiss had potent magical properties. It had the power of wiping out perplexity and despair, of making his wrists tremulous like a child's, of sending a sweet delirium through his blood, that changed it into a current of soft ethereal delight.

When he emerged from the delicious trance he was both wildly happy and sad. But he was not despondent.

"Four or five months," he whispered, "is a long time. We'll find some way out. And you are mine," he buried his lips in her fragrant hair, "all mine."

"All yours," she breathed and the dark interlacing greenery, faintly starlit, was a temple for the most heavenly emotions of earth. Theirs was the state of absolute perfection of sheer being.

On a sudden they were startled by a low laugh and voices, words indistinguishable, faint and receding. With intense attention and wildly throbbing pulses they listened for a space. A rustle of leaves down the slope was all they could hear.

Allene rose to her feet and Roderic, his arm still about her, rose with her.

"Who do you think it was?" he whispered in her ear. But she laid a finger on his lips and cautioned him to silence.

Softly she stole down with no more sound than a zephyr as far as the bougainvillea vine and with a gesture bade him not to follow her. He stood riveted like a statue of stone, but with every sense alert, his blood pounding in his ears.

Allene was peering downward, intently vigilant, like some highly organized forest creature that at a sound becomes all watchfulness. She stood thus for perhaps thirty seconds, then came softly gliding back to him.

No further sound reached them. They stood still for an instant, facing one another. Then ——

"Who was it?" he whispered, laying his hands on her slender shoulders. She shook her head mutely.

"I don't know," finally came her answering whisper. "But I think it's the boy in the cook house, Hupee, and Tetua the housemaid. Yet, I don't know ——" she added, perplexed. "I didn't think she would be — walking with him. She makes fun of him — because of his limp."

"That wouldn't make any difference," he replied, with a sudden maturity of wisdom. In a flash he remembered the time on the ship when he thought he held Allene in contempt. "Are they your friends?" he demanded.

"Ye-es," she answered dubiously. "But — not like Akura. They don't know about — about you and me."

"Ah!" he could have slain those two innocent natives then for not being the abject, devoted slaves of Allene, blindly servile in all her interests.

"Do you think they saw us?" he queried.

"I think very likely," she said.

"Would they ——" and he paused. This kind of skulking revolted him.

"Oh, I don't know — I don't know," she spoke with nervous rapidity, now genuinely disturbed, and she leaned abruptly against a tree trunk. "But I must run down at once and see Akura. If they know, she can stop their mouths."

"I'll go with you."

"No! — please, dear, stay here. Don't start back until I am at least halfway down.

Down the slope, as Roderic walked cautiously in the wake of Allene, voices were audible. Through the tangle against the shade of the canebrake where the path ran, Allene was invisible. But he distinctly heard the voices.

What had happened? His throat was parched with anger and anxiety. Soon enough he knew what had happened. While strolling about in the vicinity of the house in search of Allene, whose absence had been discovered by Galbraith, Bruce had met the two natives coming down from the hill. In answer to a query, they informed him innocently enough that they had seen Allene by the spring. That she was with the white young *tane* who had been shipwrecked, — and they laughed. Bruce thereupon had come forward and met Allene halfway down the path.

CHAPTER XIII

AN ACCIDENT

The low bank of whitening clouds the next morning soon gave way before the climbing sun. They thinned to dazzling snowiness, dissolved and disappeared before the same everlasting brilliance that a fall of rain in this region only enhances and intensifies. Nevertheless, the virgin day seemed acutely charged with dread and omen.

Roderic had slept little that night, so heated had been his brain in revolving over and over the events and the intelligence of the previous evening. The tenderness and sweet attachment of Allene! The time for drift and waiting upon circumstances was definitely past. Quick unfaltering action was now imperatively necessary. But no definite plan emerged. His mind was like a bird beating its wings in a cage, with a maddening lack of result. All that day Allene had been invisible.

Towards the following midnight, as he lay on his cot in the birdcage, he heard a roar out on the reef that stirred him to jump up and peer out. The heavens were black. All the stars had vanished. The dark surface of the lagoon seemed in a tumult and soon the sound, drawing swiftly nearer, broke into a squall of terrific rain that for the time of its duration made the Biblical deluge a mere drizzle. It swept into his birdcage as though the thing were made of illusion. He pulled his cot to the center under the thatch, but nevertheless his shelter was soon drenched and when he succeeded in lighting his

candle, he saw hundreds of moths and insects in great variety, clinging overhead until the tropic downpour should restore their liberty. He extinguished his candle and lay still under his dampening mat, immensely solitary, longing intensely for the dawn and the new brightness. Only with the cessation of the rain that lasted for hours did he fall asleep.

The first thing he heard upon presenting himself at the copra-shed the next morning was an order from Galbraith, transmitted by Orui, to lend a hand at the loading of the schooner.

The schooner was going out! The schooner that had so recently returned, that normally was not to go for nearly five months, was again to make the voyage to Papeete!

This he intuitively understood to mean only one thing. It was as though Bruce or Galbraith or both had said to him there and then in so many words:

"We cannot any longer have you on this island — you well know why. And since we can't throw you into the sea, being humane and civilized white men, we must pay the penalty of our consideration, make this unnecessary and costly trip to Papeete, ship you off to the devil and so definitely and finally get rid of you."

His knees, in the expressive Homeric phrase, were loosened. He hoped that Orui did not perceive the quiver that passed over his entire body nor any change upon his features. He turned away. So deep was his consternation that he laughed, almost hysterically. Whereupon Orui also laughed.

To this day Roderic does not know whether they were laughing at the same thing. Orui was a wise old savage in his way. But Roderic was uncertain as to why his own bitter laughter came at that moment. It may be that some echo of something he had heard or read came to him just

then, bringing a flash of memory, the image of a prisoner, by the refinement of cruelty, ordered to erect his own gibbet. But that impression may have come later.

He was, Heaven knows, intent upon no levity at that time and his brain had never worked more feverishly, albeit with small result. But through all the racing of his mind, through the fiery anger and rapid succession of wild hopes, half-formed plans, a ferocity of struggle with desponding blackness that kept descending to be again and again fought off, something in his mind like a calm detached person talking to a player at solitaire, kept insistently repeating with a fiendishly commonplace iteration:

"So you want Allene, do you, Mr. Bruce? Well, you are not going to have her, my fine fellow —— you are not going to have her — as true as God made you! — You are not going to have her!"

His seemingly unguided hands were at the work upon the copra trays, drying frantically in the sun against mildew and this hurried shipment. His brain was preoccupied with a hundred thoughts. But always the aloof jovial dweller in his skull, that seemed stronger than he, infinitely more masterful than Bruce or Galbraith, or than any one else upon the island, was coolly assuring "Mr. Bruce" that his hopes were vain. For all that, however, there was a febrile underlying pain. What if no reprieve should come, — if no plan or solution should be forthcoming?

As the morning wore on and the tide receded, so that the rush and gurgle of waters at the opening in the reef could be heard across the lagoon, as a noisy obligato to one's thoughts, Roderic could see the little schooner at the pierhead, with brown bodies in the water about her, scraping her rising sides free of sea green and barnacles. It sent a nameless pang through him, as though

his heart had missed a beat. Bruce was overseeing the work.

Unconsciously Roderic paused in his labor at the copra and became absorbed in the operations at the pier. More acutely than ever he felt that the preparation of his own gibbet was in train. Orui also had paused in his garrulity and when Roderic turned, he found the old man's large mild eyes upon him. Abruptly Orui began to discourse of miracles.

"Tapeni Brucee," he announced, "he tell us mirakers no happen to-day, because we wicked. Only in old times they happen. I thinka mirakers can happen to-day all same. What you thinka?"

"I think so too," Roderic answered absently.

"Do much mirakers happen America?"

"They happen every day," was the answer in the same tone. Then abruptly, "But what makes you ask that, Orui?"

"I ask," said Orui, "because I think a mirakers can happen anywhere. They can happa on this island."

"Yes, I guess they can, Orui."

"To smart fellah-man, who know how to want things, they can happa," Orui declared sententiously. "But him fellah must want miraker hard —— damn hard."

"Look here, Orui," demanded Roderic, with a sudden shrewd suspicion. "What is it you mean? What are you driving at?"

The old man displayed confusion and rambled off into a long tale familiar to island legend, — a miracle that two lovers compassed when pursued by their enemies. They dived into the lagoon and disappeared seemingly for good. They never came up again, so that their enemies gave up pursuit. But what those lovers did was to swim into the subaqueous opening of a cave in the coral cliffs and, once above water level, they worked their

way upward along the tunnel of that cave anciently hollowed by the sea and there they lived in bliss until their enemies had departed. The burden of the old islander's fable was that miracles are to the resourceful and those who love greatly.

"Aue! Aue!" The sharp wailing cry, in the voice of pain, suddenly came from the old Orui. Roderic, who had been listening without looking at him through the last part of the legend, wheeled about sharply. Orui sat crumpled up on the ground. A heavy copra tray with its outer lining of metal sheeting, had slipped out of his hands, the while he was fabling, fallen with the sharp edge upon his right foot and cut an ugly gash across it. The precious copra was spilled all about and blood was streaming from the wounded foot.

Quickly Roderic tore a portion of his own shirt at the bottom, made a rough bandage over the lacerated part and proceeded to help the old man to rise. But Orui could stand up on only one foot. He was unable to walk.

"Very well," said Roderic, "then I'll carry you."

"Where you carry me?" inquired the old man with doglike eyes, and the pathetic gratitude of the native.

"I'll carry you up to the house — to get some medicine." At the world "house" Orui made a wry face — glanced at the scattered copra and shook his head.

"You can't carry me," he protested weakly.

"I can and I will."

And carefully Roderic loaded the old man like a sack upon his shoulders and set forth heavily up the beach. Orui was no light burden. He was indeed a staggering load, and his moans of deprecating protest seemed to make him heavier. But Roderic toiled on with him toward the house, almost glad of this diversion from his own tormenting thoughts. Slowly, ponderously, he

swung into the avenue of the tapering palms and as he glanced up toward the house, he wondered whether he was approaching it for the last time.

A wild hope flooded him that old Galbraith might be absent, that only Allene and Akura might be there to minister to Orui, and that he might have a secret hurried consultation with the object of all the tumult of thoughts that assailed him, — a fortunate chance that might settle everything. And as though all had been satisfactorily arranged, he actually had a vision of the schooner departing without him, as he watched her from the beach.

"What the devil are you doing there!" rang out like a shrill bark from the veranda. It had the effect upon Roderic of a shattering detonation. He paused with his burden and looked up.

Old Galbraith, in white drill trousers and a yellow shirt open at the throat, his long bare neck protruding like a vulture's, was bending forward rigidly and his face was brick-red with anger.

"I am bringing up Orui," Roderic, with a calmness that surprised him, answered quietly.

"What's this? —— What for?" barked the old man, his face all but smoking with angry heat.

"He was hurt — a copra tray fell and mashed his foot."

"Damnation!" cried the old man, moving agitatedly along the veranda railing. "And who's at the copra-shed? Put him down here! Bring him to the steps and put him down, I tell you!" he yelled as though beside himself. Roderic moved slowly up the steps and gently deposited his burden on the topmost of them.

"Now get back to the shed!" raged Galbraith. "Get back this minute! Want to do all the damage you can before the island is rid of you? Get back on the run, ye vile idiot! —— Back!"

From now on, he told himself, any compunction in his heart regarding Galbraith on the score of his being Allene's father was completely at an end. To leave Allene alone in her father's hands was to leave her in the hands of a madman.

Bruce, who at his vantage point on the pierhead had observed that something out of the ordinary was going on near the house, came walking swiftly toward Roderic and met him halfway down the avenue, at the point where Roderic was turning off toward the shed.

"What's up?" he demanded brusquely. "What's happened? What are you doing here?"

Roderic answered him briefly.

The leader of *himene* singing swore a round oath. Then ——

"Hurry up!" he ordered, snarling. "Run back! The copra will be ruined. I'll be there. Be quick about it! Damn your stupid hide! —— Run!"

Roderic's fist doubled involuntarily. Red anger tinged the landscape for an instant. Tapena Bruce may or may not have realized how near he had come to grief at that moment. But on a sudden with the dash of a sprinter he shot forward and past Roderic, a streak of white in a line toward the house.

"This will be waiting for you!" muttered Roderic after him, and at a swinging though not unusual pace he strode back to the shed. And never afterward did he care to reflect upon what was at that moment in his breast.

CHAPTER XIV

THIRTY-SIX HOURS

I can still see the Roderic of the thirty-six hours that followed walking through a vibrant blankness, a tumultuous darkness that may conceivably describe the state of a condemned man in the dragging, miserable hours before his execution, but only faintly. For is not death after all a relief and a respite?

I do not remember whether he called upon the god of lovers or upon any god to succor him in the despairing blackness that was settling upon him. I do remember, or believe I remember, that in the most despondent hours a certain faint light of hope still burned in his heart. How dimly soever, I vow it still burned. A peculiar eye-filling laughter chokes me at those rare times when I recall the singular wraithlike condition in which that Roderic walked about the island during those menacing hours. He was not precisely an automaton; he was a corpse walking, moving, laboring, — a corpse, but no one knew it.

He touched no food that day or the next, but drank of water copiously. He spoke to no one for fear lest his voice should betray his state. Indeed, he was afraid at times a gust of wind might crumble and scatter him into his essential dust.

He had ceased from calling down Biblical curses upon the two men who were so urgently contriving his doom. All thoughts of hatred or revenge left him, as too trivial

or futile. Only one bitterness seemed to burn and smolder and flame again in the very center of his being:

No word of any sort, — nothing from Allene! Could she possibly acquiesce? Could she be so weak and irresolute? A thousand times he would ask himself these questions and again and again sweep them away with a fierce indignant negative.

No and ——No and —— No!

Allene was being watched. Her heart was cruelly wrung, not a doubt of it! But that vulture-like old man and the smirking hypocritical younger were holding her prisoner until they could pack him off aboard the schooner. Days and ages of suspense; eons of interminable blackness! How like a fox he scurried the night of Orui's accident, creeping on all fours through the shadows of the garden, and then running at top speed up the slope to the stone by the pool! But he knew in his thumping heart that his quest would be vain, and it was vain. No sign or message from Allene. Allene was as though she had been suddenly blotted out of existence.

And still the dim hope flickered faintly in the tortured breast. I declare in all sincerity that when the order of doom finally came the next day, when this animated shadow that was Roderic was curtly ordered by Bruce to sleep on board the schooner that night with the Kanakas, against the early departure with the tide before dawn — when Roderic was actually moving toward the schooner without having had sight or sound of Allene, hope in his bosom burned inexplicably brighter than ever before during those two dreadful days!

CHAPTER XV

FUGITIVES

Once on the schooner's deck, which was already peopled by the laughing, chattering brown mariners, looking forward to their visit to the capitol of the islands, Roderic approached them, gave them the usual "Yoranna," which they cheerfully returned, walked slowly back from the foremast to the mainmast and sank down with his back against it. It was not to be expected that the white man would join them. His aloofness was wholly normal. A single lantern in the crosstrees gave all the illumination there was on board, a mere dim dot of light.

A droning undertone, speaking in his head, was lugubriously sounding words vaguely remembered and ritually connected with mortality.

Naked, or all but naked, he had come here, and naked he was returning. He had come with lacerated flesh and now his spirit was more cruelly torn than ever flesh could be. But, oddly, those words and those fancies seemed to be floating around him, or if inside him, very close to the periphery and surface of him. The inner and intimate self of him, a whole island, a solid continent surrounded by these dark troublous waters, was alert, alive, of a massive integrity, permeated by quite another idea, an intense, intuitive consciousness.

He was not going with the schooner! The schooner might sail when and where it would. A dozen Bruces and a score of Galbraiths might plan and plot and con-

trive. He was stronger than they. A powerful current seemed to be vibrating in him and from him to Allene, — a direct line between them. His conviction amounted to an absolute certainty that Allene was thinking likewise, permeated by exactly the same thought. She was intensely *believing in him!*

Fitful gusts of loneliness, nevertheless, descended on him at moments, seemingly from the soft encircling night, from the multitude of glowing stars, so brilliant, so numerous, yet so aloof. Stars somehow are never intimate, never inspiring to intimacy. Their only influence is to make one feel infinitesimally small and helpless. But this balm they carry and rain down: other men are no less infinitesimally small, insignificant.

The waters of the lagoon were gently lapping against the side of the newly cleaned ship. The voices of the Paumotans forward were gradually silenced. When Roderic rose up noiselessly behind the mast, he saw an amorphous, grotesquely shaped, darker shadow where those men lay sprawling asleep. Softly he crept back to the starboard after-railing, slipped between the bars and dropped to the planking of the pier. With less noise than a cat would have made, he walked stealthily up the pier to the beach. No voice challenged him, no sound was heard as he moved through the mellow darkness and, once his feet touched the still warm sand of the beach, a profound sigh escaped him. He turned, startled, to see whence it came and then smiled at himself with compressed lips.

Resolutely, without a tremor of doubt, he struck up the slope on the Galbraith side of the stream and as though a long-arranged unquestioned appointment were prompting him, made his way in the direction of the house. Abreast of the house, he paused for a space, looking with an intense magnetic longing through the

walls, as it were, to Allene within, as though wondering why she did not penetrate them and come floating to him through the air. Again a faint doubt assailed him, but only for an instant. With an effort he turned his gaze away firmly from the dark, slumbering house and sped on with a secret haste toward the spring. The shadows of the puraos and breadfruit trees absorbed him as some great black sponge might draw in a drop of water. But his feet were sure in that velvet darkness.

Once at the spring he stood still, breathing hard, his eyes roaming in a nameless search through that dark world of tangled foliage that very faintly began to define itself. Why, it suddenly flashed through his throbbing brain, had he come here? But the query no sooner presented itself than it vanished. He had come because it was the only thing to do. Now he must think swiftly, surely, without a flaw. He sank down upon the stone and mechanically laid his hands upon its surface on either side of him. It was cool and infinitely friendly, — his dearest friend upon the island, not counting Allene.

But for thought came only the image of Allene. Her lithe, willowy figure, her face of a beauty now preternaturally etherealized, her deep and candid sincerity, — all were so vivid before him that involuntarily he held out his arms to the dark encompassing vacancy. And strangely enough, he saw her in a flowing garment with her shimmering hair down in a fragrant mist, cloudlike, about her transfigured countenance, floating through the air! He had assuredly never seen her so before. And once he could swear he heard her voice with tears in it calling "Roderic!" Was she dead? Oh, no! And he shuddered.

Again and again his effort at planning, at concentrated thought, would fall inert before this image of Allene,

her star-eyed pallor, the floating misty aureole of her hair, her flowing garment and her outstretched arms. No, he had never seen her hair like this, unbound. Yet, why —— ?

On a sudden he leaped from the stone like a startled savage or an animal at bay. What was that? A sound, like the swishing of twigs among the underbrush below, perhaps a bird or a fruit-pigeon slipping from its perch in a tree with a flutter of wings?

Pursuit! That one thought like a shot blotted out all other impressions in the next sound. A figure, a white figure, dimly defined itself, — or were his eyes betraying him? Involuntarily he bounded forward. Yes! ——

"My God!" he whispered hoarsely. "It's Allene. Oh, my darling! I knew you'd come!" And he folded her in his arms as her own outstretched ones fell about his shoulders and her head with a sob sank against his throat.

How long they stood there enwrapt, neither of them knew or cared. For Roderic, at all events, all plans and purposes, throbbing longings and ages of desperate yearnings seemed to be fulfilled and accomplished. All pain was stilled and dead before the supreme fact that once again he was holding the beloved figure of Allene in his arms. Was it really she, or only the phantasmal image of her of his earlier picturings? The fragrance and the warmth of her against his breast permeated him and he found himself crooning and murmuring over her in a voice that was strangely unfamiliar to him.

"But tell me, darling: how did you know I was here?"

"Oh, Roderic, dear, it's been filling my mind like a shout for the past hours. 'He's there and you must go to him!' I was waiting till they should go to bed and be sound asleep."

For the past three hours! he reflected; even while he was yet aboard the schooner!

"How did you get out of the house, dearest?"

"I slipped out of my window to the veranda and came right here," she answered simply. "I didn't even think whether I was making a noise or not. I could not think." Exactly his own experience!

"Neither could I!" He gloried exultingly. "The only thought in my head was that I could not leave you. Everything seemed possible except to go away from you."

"Oh, Roderic," she cried, with a little catch in her voice, "do you really love me — as much as that?"

"Only some millions of times more than my own life or than anything else on earth," he answered with the delicious serious readiness with which young lovers can say such things. She kissed him tremulously for that and the cloud of her hair, unbound, precisely as in his vision of a little while ago, brushed his face. "I suppose," he added with a blissful recklessness, "they'll try to kill me if they can't catch me, but I don't care, my darling," he gripped her closely. "I don't care! You are with me now!"

"Oh, they!" she retorted with a contempt that surprised and delighted him. "Then they'll have to kill me too — but they won't. But now we had better plan what to do, dearest."

Gently, still entranced, he led her to the stone. What she was wearing he could not precisely tell, save that it was soft and white. But over it she wore a light-colored cloak, sometimes called a polo coat, such as he had seen her wear on the *Alice*. And her hair! That image of her his fevered fancy had conjured up! That touch of mystery awed and puzzled him like a miracle. Then, on a sudden, he remembered Orui's words concerning the

miracles that might happen to great and resourceful lovers.

Tensely, in a low murmur, as he seated her and drew her cloak more closely about her, he repeated the words of Orui to her, mentioning the legend of the lovers' cave that inspired them.

"Orui is perfectly right," she answered with a warm gentle gravity. "Why not? Isn't it more of a miracle that you are you and I am I and that we love each other as we do?"

Where do women as young and inexperienced as Allene get their profound wisdom, he inwardly marvelled?

"You darling baby," he whispered against her cheek. "You talk as if you had lived a thousand lives."

"Perhaps I have," she whispered in response. Then "Oh!" and on a sudden she beat her forehead with the palm of her open hand.

"What's the matter?"

"Why didn't I think of it before?" she demanded of herself. "The caves! —— Oh, I'm so stupid. I came only because I had to come —— to be with you. But the caves! Of course! —— Oh, Roderic, confess you only told me that story to remind me. You are so clever, you see!"

"What do you mean, darling? Tell me," he pressed her with his encircling arms and taking quite for granted the imputation of wisdom in her words. "Tell me, —— quick!"

"Didn't I tell you that there are caves in the cliffs —— at the tips of the wings? I forget. So much has happened ——" She now talked in a delicious breathy whisper, like a child with a secret in one's ear, yet with the urgency of a passionate woman protecting her love. He listened rapt in a sense of worship.

"Yes, you did, dearest ——" he answered mechanically, —— "which wings?"

"The islands' wings. It's shaped like a bird flying, you know. Oh, I have told you, only you've forgotten. There's one cave on our side of the island and two or three on the native side. Only nobody ever goes there. The natives think they are filled with ghosts. Way off there." She waved her hand to the right. "You could go there by keeping almost straight to the right. The lagoon is very narrow there; they don't even go there to fish. The land falls as you go down from here and it becomes soft, almost swampy. Then it slopes up again. There is a mammea fruit plantation right where it begins to rise. I once went that far with Akura. I made her take me. But she wouldn't go as far as the caves. But I saw them afterwards from a boat with father. He was rowing round."

"Then that's where I must go," Roderic took her up eagerly. But on a sudden desolation struck him. "But how," he demanded sadly "can I leave you now —— alone?"

"You must, Roderic dear," she answered quickly, "until ——" and she paused abruptly. "No, no!" she all but sobbed in another voice, that seemed to pull at her heartstrings and at his. "No, I couldn't bear it. I am going with you, Roderic dearest."

"You!" he exclaimed aghast, yet with a strange thrill of joyous exultation in his heart. "But how? —— Is it —— do you think ——"

"I am going, Roderic dear; I must. I can't leave you. What — does anything matter? —— What do I matter?" She added with a seemingly irrelevant, aloof, almost rapt speculation, her eyes turned upon the network of darkness straight before her. "You see, they'll find you there — sure to find you at last — and they must

find me there, too!" In a sudden flash the meaning of her words blazed into his brain.

"God! Allene, darling, you are brave!" he breathed in exultant admiration. She was a thousand times braver than he could ever dream of being, was the thought that passed like a spark of light through his brain. Did he deserve all that — even though he truly loved her?

"Oh, Roderic," she queried suddenly with a sort of fiery abstraction. "Do you really love me?"

Now, that was a perplexing thing. Why should she ask him that just then? Did he really love her, when ——

"Not as you deserve," he finally answered in a rush of illuminating candor. "You are so wonderful, darling, and I —— But I merely worship the ground you walk on, the least thing about you — and as for death, if I could die a thousand times for you ——"

"Hush!" she breathed and laid her cold fingers on his lips. And then she uttered a deep sigh, which deeply echoed in his own tense heart.

"Then let us start, dearest," she commanded and rose lightly from her place on the stone.

"Like this? ——" he began glancing at her attire, her hair.

"Like what, then?" She gave a sad little laugh. "I couldn't go back and change —— don't you see? And we must hurry, dear. We've no time to lose." She with her fragility seemed to tower with strength. "Have you any matches?" she demanded suddenly.

"Yes," he felt in his pocket, "a few."

"That's good," she whispered. And on a sudden she threw an arm about his neck, pressed her lips against his and held him close for an intense moment of throbbing silence. It was a moment like no other that Roderic had ever experienced. There was a fulness about it, charged with a burden of unspoken words which both,

he believed, desired to utter and could not, — an immense finality, a momentous beginning. She turned away suddenly with a slight quiver of her head.

"Come," she said.

Then taking his hand in hers, they moved away cautiously into the dark interlacing tangle of vegetation.

The terrible splendor of life! He was silently exclaiming to himself over and over, as he groped slightly behind her. But what was passing in Allene's mind at that moment? Her hand was in his, her spirit was acting, guiding, absorbed only in his interest. They were as nearly one in heart and mind as it is given human beings to be. Nevertheless, he was oppressed by the barriers of separate personalities that parted him from her. Even in this hour of love and adoration the most intense, her spirit was hers, and his apart. No absolute fusion was possible against the loneliness that held them severed, though together. For the moment, however, he was content to be a satellite to her own free and governing spirit. She led the way and he followed with confident steps.

They walked in silence at first or with only brief, monosyllabic words of caution, guidance and assent. How marvellously at home Allene the exquisite seemed to be in this wild jungle of creepers, underbrush and tree trunks standing or fallen! To Roderic, from the harder northern clime of small-leaved vegetation and whiplike vines, the broad expanse of some creeper leaf of the fig family that flapped against his face like a banner, the ropelike lianas, the giant climbers like flexible tree trunks in grotesque twists and coils, bent upon choking and destroying the more rigid boles, still brought a sense of uncanny struggle, as though powerful living organisms were silently clashing and battling. But out-

wardly at least Allene walked on among them without trepidation.

"We mustn't lose our way," she whispered at one time, as she paused, glancing round and upward for direction.

"I am just finding mine," he answered mechanically, like one startled out of a dream. And then he realized that it was not he that spoke, but something deeper than his surface mind, — a voice from the very depths of his being. His mind was suspended, functionless, as though the power from it had been turned off by a switch.

When they came to the softer ground lower down, which seemed like a bed of humus dank with the smell and accumulation of ages of dead vegetation, she paused.

"I am glad there are no snakes on the island," she murmured. It was the only sign of trepidation she had shown thus far.

"I'll carry you, darling," he declared, seized her in his arms and lifted her as one lifts a child. He could see her smiling tenderly under the starlight as she nestled in his arms, gazing up to him with eyes full of starshine.

"I ought to be carrying you, dear," she whispered; "everybody has been so hateful to you." Her profound human sympathy, despite her youth and the environing circumstances, brought him a deep humility.

"Sweetheart!" was all he could murmur. "You are carrying me," and he kissed the soft lips under his. But he only walked a few steps with his sweet burden, when she asked to be let down.

"Better let me walk, Roderic. Then we can both step more lightly. This way you sink so much deeper — with my weight." He did not answer and trod on. Her weight! But she insisted and he was obliged to set her down again.

The soggy moss swished and gurgled round their feet, which sank often ankle-deep. More than once Allene lost a slipper and Roderic his rope-soled sandals. Both became masses of slimy ooze. But Allene insisted that they both must wear their footgear, regardless of discomfort, from an instinctive feminine fear of hidden dangers beneath. A thin white mist hung over this valley that lent a supernatural ghostlike quality to the scene. Allene was in a hurry to pass through it, and she pressed on with a steady energy that constantly surprised him. They came to the higher ground at length and on the edge of the mammea grove Allene sat down on a fallen tree and sighed.

"Now we can rest a minute," she said. Roderic stepped forward into the grove, plucked two or three of the melonlike mammea apples, cut them in half and slicing out the interior with his knife, fed Allene with the juicy, soft red meat of a flavor like no other, and she was refreshed and grateful.

"These little things, darling, are all I can do for you," he murmured ruefully. He was young enough to feel distressed and depressed by the undoubted leadership of a mere girl, even though that girl were Allene, in the really momentous enterprise.

"You are doing all — everything, dear," she answered sweetly. "It's you — your strength, Roderic. A year ago — a month ago even — I could no more have done this than fly." He was grateful but not deceived.

"Courage — strength must be in you, to come out," he told her. "And you are just aflame with them."

She laughed softly with a liquid note as of tears, and leaped from her seat.

"It isn't strength or courage, dear; it's just — love."

"Come," she called almost gayly, taking his hand, "the dawn will come before we know it."

"What do we care?" he asked, lightly pressing her hand. "Aren't we here?" If only, he thought, this ramble with Allene, however charged with somber gravity, could continue endlessly!

"What do we care!" she expostulated gently. "Oh, Roderic dear, don't you see? Bruce has probably already found that you're not on the schooner. They'll sweep the island. They won't find out about me until later. We must hurry."

A shock of realization struck him. He had almost forgotten in the company of this marvelous new Allene revealed to him, whom and what he was fleeing! Once again the sense of deep hostility on the part of old Galbraith, the feeling of being the victim of a man hunt, peculiarly odious to him, when he had committed no crime, done nothing but labor from the time of his landing here, came over Roderic like a leaden cloud, heralding a storm.

"Lord!" he muttered half to himself, "I still can't see why your father should hate me so. After all, I've done nothing to him."

"Some day you'll understand better," she answered. "It isn't just you, Roderic dear. It's anybody. But it's all my fault, don't you see? It's because he loves me so much, poor dad!" Her voice was quivering. "He thinks he can hold me as he holds this island, the place he has made and built up with his hands. If only he could have ——" and the pathos of the ancient conflict between parental will and the child's desire shook her. "But I can't change my heart, Roderic dear. I know how much I'm hurting him and I can't help it! That's what makes it so horrid. The only other thing I could do would be to die. I tried so hard to give you up, dear —— oh, yes, I have tried —— but I couldn't, couldn't, simply couldn't!"

Roderic gripped her shoulders with a swift movement,

and felt a spasmodic tug at his heart, wrung by contrition, gratitude, love, emotion, more poignant that he had yet experienced.

"And you won't regret it, darling!" he whispered huskily, himself shaken. "I want to live only for you, to make you the happiest girl on earth."

The happiest girl on earth! How grotesque those words sounded now! As they reverberated in his heart, the darkness and uncertainty of their background suddenly galled and stung him. They were fugitives, on a dot of land controlled by enemies! In the aching fret of his rebellion against circumstances, a thought that continually rankled in his mind now insistently pressed for utterance.

"I can understand your father better," he said, "after what you've told me about him. But to pick Bruce for you, of all men — that's what I can't understand — Bruce!"

"That's where father went wrong," she answered him simply, readily. "Old people are like that sometimes, don't you think so, dear? And he is so obstinate — and I am so obstinate — poor dad!"

The clarity of her vision in those conditions was a new revelation to him, that impressed and captivated him afresh.

They walked on through the cleaner growth of mammea trees, each with its dark spray of leaves at the top, and the fruit clustering beneath the leaves. Roderic put a steadying arm about her in the hope that that might ease in part the burden of her toiling uphill. Willingly and gladly at that moment would he have carried her on his shoulders or inside his heart, if that had been possible. The ground was constantly rising. Again and again he begged her to pause and rest, but she only shook her head and pressed on.

Before long they were leaving the mammea grove and emerging upon high ground, rugged and more broken, but still green, with here and there a palm stem tapering into the night. The intermittent sound of the surf was louder here and the darkness below was the sea.

On a sudden Allene paused and laid a cautioning hand upon his arm.

"Listen!" she whispered.

"What is it?"

"Don't you hear — voices — far off?" He listened intently with straining eardrums that were not yet practiced enough to discount the surf. He could hear nothing else at first. Finally, very faintly, as from a great distance, he thought he could discover something like the most tenuous reflections or echoes of calls, shouts, but be told himself he was not sure.

"Perhaps it's the breeze," he murmured. She shook her head.

"Bruce has found out you're not aboard. Let's hurry, dear." And in her voice was anguish which he apprehended clearly. Upon an island where this auditory experience was possible, to hear voices from the lagoon at the pier, concealment for long was hardly probable. Indeed, it was absurd. It was a despairing situation.

"Hurry on, dear," urged Allene. "Let's hurry."

The forces now playing about them seemed like great crashes of lightning, terrible and menacing, that might spare as they might destroy. In any case, they were wildly, terrifyingly illuminating. Allene had intuitively felt this from the moment she had decided to come to him. But even Roderic was now for the first time permeated by the sense of possible tragedy, — by the feeling that they were embarked not so much upon an adventure as on the opening act of a grimly fateful life drama.

They were upon the cliffs now. The boom of the surf was loud, and the darkness assumed that more intense dead quality that to those who know heralds the dawn.

To Roderic, however, it brought an immense pity for the girl beside him, a burst of sudden comprehension of what he was doing. She was at that moment dearer to him than all else on earth, including himself. Her frail courageous beauty seemed to cry out to him for protection. He suddenly felt himself miserably unworthy of all this sacrifice. She was cutting herself off from all that was her own, her past, everything, for him. What was he to her? He was a stranger from nowhere, leading her to wretchedness, to pain, to he knew not what. A wave of depression swept over him.

"Listen, dear," he spoke hurriedly. "How can I lead you into all this trouble — on my account? I am not worthy of it. Come on, I'll take you back to your father —— I'll give myself up to them and — take the consequences."

She stood still for a moment and looked at him aghast.

"Is that what you want?" she asked in a low murmur.

"Is that what I want! My darling, if I could only make you understand! You are everything to me — a million times more than my own miserable life —— If only I could make you understand. That's why the thought of your suffering is — is horrible. To cut you off this way — is horrible —— I've just realized —— how I wish you'd understand! —— It's not my wants I was thinking of, but you—— you, sweetheart!"

Her answer was either a laugh or a sob, he did not know which. It was like the sound a crying child makes whose wish had been gratified, and its last sob may be either involuntary or an expression of joy.

"Come, dear, and let's hurry," was all she said, as she

slipped her arm through his and again urged him onward. He stumbled on beside her with an immensity of relief that all but intoxicated him. Her step suddenly grew more cautious. The surf was crying more loudly. An inshore breeze fanned their faces.

"The caves must be somewhere here," she whispered. "Be careful, dear, how you step. Now get your matches out. And don't let us lose any of them. We need them all." With careful guidance she led the way, still clinging to his arm, along the top of the cliffs, and he found himself descending a shallow gully. When they were at the bottom she bade him light one of the matches and stood so as to screen the light from the land. The match blew out almost instantly, but it had given her enough illumination evidently, for she led the way down the gulley overgrown with ferns toward the edge. Once at the edge she stood for a moment and turned her face toward the east. He followed her gaze with a febrile anxiety.

"The dawn," she murmured.

Yes, down in the direction of the house and the pier, a faint grayness seemed to be opening up the darkness like the cutting edge of some gigantic knife, cleaving the heavens. Under their very eyes the rift kept growing wider and the darkness to fade into pallor. The first tinge of redness like a shadowy bar touched the far horizon.

Allene stirred as from a reverie and with an inarticulate murmur turned her back upon the nascent light toward the darker side. The cliffs were broken and they walked on for a space on the ledge the breadth of a country road, lined with fern and small vegetation, with here and there a palm overhanging from above.

"Here," she said suddenly, before a mass of the ferns, "let's look in here. Light a match, dear."

The light revealed an opening in the cliff behind the

ferns. Both of them bent low and peered inward, Roderic extending his hand with the lighted match in front of him.

Scattered fragments, something white, were gleaming inside the cave, — bones, portions of human skeletons.

"Oh!" Allene uttered one cry and leaped back horror-struck. Roderic dropped his match and was at her side in an instant. She was shaking from head to foot, quivering as in an ague.

"Allene!" he muttered wildly, incoherently. "Horrible! —— Lord! —— I didn't know!"

"Of course you didn't — dear," she spoke with chattering teeth. "I — ought to have told you. They used to bury their dead here. But — what does it matter!" And she laughed hysterically, with the back of her hand across her face and her head lowered as if in shame.

The eastern sky was now flaming. The dawn was racing forward like a conflagration. The edge of the sun, an incandescent arc, was already showing on the horizon. Her body was still quivering slightly against his arm.

"Shall we go back, dear?" he asked her, alarm and dull resignation mingled in his voice.

"No, of course not!" she gasped, her body stiffening under the rigid command of her will. "Let's try the next one."

The opening of the next cave, in a cliff shaped somewhat like a human head, was broad and only little lower that their own heads. Automatically Roderic struck a match and with a gesture which bade Allene stand without, he bent forward and stepped exploringly inward. The cave was clean, with little vegetation at its mouth, the white coral rock stained in patches of brown here and there, with crumbling fragments of the stone strewing the cracked irregular floor. Two lizards ran out

between his feet and scuttled away down the farther edge.

"This is all right," he called out thickly to Allene. The match burnt his fingers and expired as she approached. He lit another. She peered inward over his shoulder.

"Yes," she breathed. "This is all right," and they crept in. At the back of the cave, a ledge of stone like a narrow sloping bench protruded from the wall.

"Sit down here, dear, and rest." He held his flickering match aloft and pointed toward the ledge. But on a sudden she uttered a low, sobbing cry, grasped at the roof of the cave wildly and would have fallen if he had not dropped his match and caught her with both arms.

"What is it, darling," he cried in alarm. "Are you fainting? Speak to me!"

"No, dear," she sighed with a strained tearful weariness. "I'm all right. Only tired — oh, so tired!"

Swiftly he lifted her in his arms, struck his head against the roof as he tried to straighten under his burden, but he was scarcely aware of it. With Allene resting in his arms, he sat down heavily upon the ledge. A convulsive shudder shook her like a child after a great fright or a harrowing experience. Her head fell pathetically against his shoulder. Her eyes were closed and even in that obscurity he could see that her face was deathly white. At moments she still quivered with little, spasmodic shivers that penetrated him like a knife. At last she was still. All the bright eager life seemed to have gone out of her.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STRUGGLE

Moveless, Roderic sat gazing now at Allene, breathing softly against his breast, in the crepuscular dimness of the cave, now outward at the pure morning light that revealed a speckless heaven and the almost cutting blue of the untroubled Pacific stretching boundlessly southward.

Once again he felt himself a castway against a cosmic infinite background. But now it was far less simple. He was a castaway, a fugitive, but not alone. She was with him, she, — who filled the world by herself and was more precious than all worlds. His mind was now revolving round and round only one thought: He must not lose her! The strangeness of his bizarre situation seemed a natural part of the order of events.

Only a terrible anxiety was in his heart as he kept gazing down at the white face beneath his eyes. Whelmed in its cloud of silken hair, that pale face seemed so little and trusting, so infinitely dear. With capricious obstinacy a whimsical speculation he was not inviting kept winding through his harassed brain.

Why and how did she come to give him her love, even so far back as on the outward voyage? How do they choose and how come to bestow it upon this or that one, — upon him? He felt himself contritely unworthy, and found no answer to these insistent, buzzing questions. He only knew that now his life was hers and

that he was more than ready to spill it in her behalf. An obscure fear kept hovering in the background of his thoughts that those men might appear at any moment, and, by their ugly passions, reduce what was great and beautiful to their own stature and color. Except for the voice of the reef across the narrow strip of lagoon, no sound came to his ears. And the voice of the reef, with its dazzling shimmer of white, seemed oddly cheerful now. But the expectation of being at any moment hunted down kept his mind riveted to the figures of those two men who loomed darkly in his imagination.

Again and again he kept gazing down at the miracle of Allene's closed eyelids, at her misty hair which he touched lightly with his cheek, at the perfection of her slightly parted lips. Finally he could not resist gently touching them with his own. Their sweetness and softness seemed to melt all the bitterness of his thoughts regarding Galbraith and Bruce. Over and over again he brushed her lips with his. A faint color came stealing to her cheeks and her eyelids fluttered open and his heart gave a joyous leap. They closed again, however, and though he felt contrition at disturbing her, a new exultation bounded in his veins and once again the throbbing of life gave him a sense of mastery, of readiness to meet fate if it took the form of a dozen Galbraiths or Bruces, — of triumphant youth. A flash of heat overspread all his body. The sweet purity in her face was awe-inspiring.

He kissed her lips fervidly and this time he found her lustrous eyes gazing into his and a deeper flush upon her cheeks.

"Allene — darling — love!" he whispered in an ecstasy. "To think all that you have been and are to me!" She smiled faintly with those exquisite parted lips and with a whimsical troubled sweetness murmured:

"A great deal of trouble, Roderic — just having my own way."

"That's the grandest way there is, dearest; the only way in the world."

"But we are not at the end of it yet," she replied more soberly, her face clouding over.

"No, it's not the end," he answered slowly, swept anew by the menace of their situation. "But it's the beginning," he added firmly. "It will always be the beginning with us as long as we are together."

"Always? — always? — " she repeated dreamily. Then suddenly with a moan, she cried, "Oh! I wonder how soon they'll come tracking us here!"

"Don't let us think of that," he urged quickly, tenderly. "If only this could last forever — like this!" and he pressed her to him more warmly.

They were lost for a moment in each other's eyes, gazing deeply with the thrill of ineffable love.

On a sudden Roderic's body quivered to an involuntary rigidity. He had looked up. Allene's eyes swiftly followed his. The mouth of the cave was perceptibly darkened. The face and form of Bruce McClung was filling the middle of the entrance!

A tense and chilling silence followed for perhaps ten seconds, that seemed vastly longer, during which the occupants of the cave and the man without regarded each other fixedly, almost it seemed without breathing. Then Bruce McClung bared his teeth in a grin that was like a snarl, intending to convey his irony, contempt and hatred.

Allene suddenly made as if to rise from her position and sat down, quivering, against Roderic on the ledge, her eyes still fixed upon the staring gaze of Bruce. Roderic leaped to his feet and charged forward.

"What do you want?" he cried. "Get out of this!"

He felt himself swept by a wave of passionate hatred for that man. He felt suddenly capable of anything now excepting thought.

"I'll be taking this young woman back — to her father," was Bruce's maddeningly calm reply. "We'll deal with you later."

Roderic scarcely remembered what happened during the next few seconds. He was a raging creature of the wild, possessed by a frenzy of hate for Bruce, of protection for Allene, of a sweeping ferocity he did not suspect existed in him. A red dimness filmed his eyes. He plunged forward toward Bruce and encountered nothing. He dashed out of the cave, saw a figure in white drill retreating on the rim at the edge of the cliffs. At the turn where the gully between the two prominences leads back to the papaya grove, he caught him by the collar and grappled with him.

They swayed together for an instant, the snarling grin on Bruce's face now changed to a grim deadly look of hatred. On a sudden Roderic saw Bruce's hand slipping into his coat pocket and his own instantly followed it. He knew what the metallic object was that he encountered beneath the other man's fist. He seized it by the middle in the fraction of a second before the other man had quite gripped it and with a backward sweep of his hand hurled it far out over the cliff behind him. Then a shower of blows from his fists with a rapidity that he could not possibly have planned, seemed to nullify the other's guard, to fall with a machinelike force upon his face, head, shoulders, chest, — until Bruce stumbled backward, fell, and lay huddled at his feet.

The sudden cessation of the driving of his fists was the first pause that gave him a consciousness of what he was doing. He glared down at the crumpled form of Bruce on the ground, and in the same moment, it seemed,

he saw Allene running toward him from behind, wringing her hands; and before him, descending from above into the gully, he perceived the brick-red face of old Galbraith with Hupee and Orui scrambling in the rear.

He ran back to Allene, threw an arm about her shoulders and stood panting and quivering at her side. By the time he looked again at the spot that was the scene of his conflict, he saw Bruce scrambling to his feet with the help of Orui, and Galbraith towering over him with a fury that seemed to verge upon an apoplectic stroke, cursing and calling the wretched Bruce a " white-livered slack-twisted loon."

A muttering protest, which he could not catch, came from Bruce, who seemed unsteady upon his feet. He was wiping blood from his lips with a handkerchief.

" Wheesht! " cried the old man. " Don't talk to me! A fine mess you've made of it! You should have come back to me!"

In justice to Bruce, Roderic thought then, and he has thought ever since that there was little else he could have done, — he being Bruce.

But rigidly Galbraith came stalking toward them along the gully, his eyes fixed in a devastatingly fiery glare, not upon Roderic, but upon the face of his daughter.

" You dare to look me in the face! " he snapped with a bitterness of wrath that made her lower her eyes. He stood glaring for a time without speaking, but burning with rage to the boiling pitch.

" Answer me! " he rasped harshly. " When did you leave the house? "

" It was a quarter to twelve, father," she spoke in a low tone, but with no suggestion of shame, which thrilled Roderic and brought him a sudden glad heartening.

" Quarter past twelve! " he repeated, in a raging con-

sternation. "You have been all the night!" And his hand flew up to his throat.

"Oh, father!" she cried in alarm, and started forward.

"Stand away there!" he warned her hoarsely. "You — you! —— D' you know what ye've done?" She was silent, her eyes gazing piteously at his struggle with his own rage.

"Answer me!" he cried again. "D' you know what you've done?"

"Yes, father," she answered low, and then the tears literally came jetting from her eyes down her cheeks and she lifted up her voice. "I love him, father," she spoke out simply, with quivering lips. "And he loves me!" A great pride shot glowing through Roderic's pulses at this, and he drew more closely to Allene.

"Love! love! love! ——" exclaimed the old man, beside himself in a fury of exasperation. "God — girl! Are you your mother over again? I little thought I'd live to see the day!"

A flush of red leaped into her face and suffused it.

"Yes!" she cried, trembling. "My mother over again! And I'm glad and — proud of it! I love him ——" She seized Roderic's hand and gripped it. "He' s the only husband I shall ever have! I would die sooner — throw myself from that cliff before I'd marry — anybody else!" And with tears still streaming, and trembling from head to foot, she stood against Roderic at a loss for a moment, then threw herself sobbing and quivering against his breast.

"Darling," Roderic in a choked voice told her, as he held her to him; "my Allene — my wife. Let them try to part us if they can!"

Glowering, baffled, speechless, old Galbraith stood for a moment, lifted his hands halfway and dropped them, glanced mechanically over his shoulder at Bruce and the

natives close behind him, turned and started to walk toward them, only to spin round again and pause. He seemed to stiffen and crackle to his full height. Then for the first time he addressed Roderic.

"Bring her back to the house!" And he turned and walked rigidly away, his back with a slight stoop now as he addressed himself to the sloping side of the gully. Roderic experienced a faint thrill of admiration for the old man, who wasted no further words in abuse, revilement or superfluous precautions. In Galbraith's view seemingly all that could happen had already happened.

For some minutes Allene still stood sobbing against Roderic's breast, speechless the while he endeavored to soothe her with incoherent words of endearment.

"I knew how much it would hurt him," she finally uttered brokenly. "And — oh! — I am sorry! But — but ——" and she could not speak further. Slowly, silently, Roderic giving her what support he could, they set out in the wake of the others toward the house.

Only the lame Hupee, aflame with curiosity, looked back at them, though Orui from time to time cast a furtive friendly glance toward them over his shoulder.

"Are you strong enough, dear? Can you walk all the way back?" Roderic asked her tenderly. It would have been no surprise to him had she shown signs of failing, after a sleepless night of fatigue and harrowing experience. But her will power was as ever dominant.

"Oh, yes," she answered almost impatiently. "But what will they do, dear — what will they do?"

That was something concerning which he himself was filled with a febrile thirst for knowledge.

"What can they do?" He answered mechanically, without thinking. "If they try to put me on that schooner, it will be the worse for them. They'll never

take me away from here alive. And your father heard what you said. What can they do?"

A moment's reflection afterward showed him that these hastily spoken words of reassurance expressed his innermost thought. It flashed through his mind that he should not have cast away Bruce's weapon. Yet, the next instant he was glad he had.

"Bare hands!" he muttered to himself aloud, "Bare hands!"

"What did you say, dear?" Allene queried.

"Nothing, dear. I was talking to myself."

They were walking back along exactly the same way they had come and he felt a new admiration for Allene and the sureness with which she had piloted them to the caves, during the night. It struck him, as he looked ahead at the others entering the papaya grove, that the procession was oddly like a funeral. The two white men in advance, the one erect, the other with his wretched head hanging, and the two brown natives like mutes behind them. The contemplation of the hangdog appearance of Bruce brought him a thrill of savage pleasure. "I had saved that beating up for him," he thought boyishly, "and I surely delivered it." But the soberer cast of thought supervened and once again his mind went racing toward the future. More than once he urged Allene to pause and rest, but always she shook her head. Only when they reached the little pool by the stone she stopped suddenly, stretched out her hands and murmured,

"Oh, Roderic, I know how father feels. If only I hadn't hurt him so! But — but ——" And Roderic knew that despite her piteously sincere contrition, her heart was irresistibly singing, as was his own. In the depths of her eyes was a solemn joy, the joy of youth triumphant.

"If I loved you before," he answered her irrelevantly, "I love you a million times more now. You are — superb! Nothing can ever drive me from you!"

The others were already past the bougainvillea and could not see them embrace. Not once had old Galbraith turned his head during that entire march.

"The old sport!" thought Roderic, not without a touch of admiration for the stiff, rigid, old figure in white.

On a sudden, when the white men in advance came to the edge of the canebrake, they paused and Galbraith for the first time turned and summoned the following natives to him. They were in brief colloquy for perhaps a minute. To his daughter and Roderic he gave not even a glance.

"What are they plotting now?" Roderic wondered out of curiosity rather than any sense of alarm. No alarm, seemingly, could penetrate him now. He was insensible to any trace of fatigue; he walked as in an armor of reckless, defiant confidence.

"They are only telling the natives to keep silent," Allene murmured quickly, "as though they could!"

She was probably right, but not a single native face was visible anywhere as they approached the house. Below on the lagoon the little schooner was riding to anchor a short distance from the pier in the channel, her nose pointing outward. Galbraith and Bruce had disappeared within the house and the natives were suddenly blotted out.

Allene and Roderic walked up the veranda steps and stood for a moment hesitant before the door. The azure heavens and the dazzling sunlight, the immense stillness all about seemed to surprise their beating hearts as though bent on shaming their tumultuous agitation. With a sudden movement Roderic pushed open the door

and they stood with an odd sensation of two strayed children come back. The broad, low-ceiled room with its dim coloring surrounded them as though bent on intimacy. Allene, with a dewy-eyed puzzlement whispered.

"It is all just the same, and yet — why is everything so strange?"

A clock ticking sounded preternaturally loud, and then all at once it occurred to them that they were alone in the room. Automatically they listened. A blur of voices came to them from Galbraith's apartment at the farther angle on the right. They could distinguish no words save a general hum at first. Then suddenly Bruce's voice rose loud with a note of startled shrill incredulity:

"You're mad, Uncle Allen! You're mad — you can't mean it!"

The answer was a stream of picturesquely vigorous curses that made Allene turn away with a flush for an instant, and yet she listened no less eagerly than did Roderic. Both their hearts were beating violently.

"But when I tell you," Bruce, now heedless of discretion, shrilled, "when I tell you that I am willing to marry her even now — in spite of all that's happened — you can speak of that — that blackguard! ——"

"Damnation upon you and your willingness!" cried the other with fury. "I'll not have your condescension, I tell ye!"

"And besides," he added with renewed vigor, "you are not the man I thought you, Bruce. You've bungled! — you've proven yourself a fool!"

"And is all my work to go for nothing?" cried Bruce with bitterness. "I've changed my life at your bidding —— I've slaved for you! — and now you'll kick me out like a dog when you've no further use for me!"

"Rubbish!" rapped the old man. "I've told you what I'll do for you. You can plant the copra in a hundred other places in the Pacific! Now an end to this! There's no help for it, I tell you! D'ye think I've planned this? —— And there's but one way. —— And that's my way!"

The door of his room abruptly opened. He came stalking rigidly out and by one of those swift grotesque inversion of life he appeared suddenly like some Puritan judge bent upon executing in cold justice what fate and passion had already accomplished in his despite. Not only did he ignore that he was beaten, but he would sternly hurl his victims into the very briar-patch of their desires, — which he icily seemed to ignore.

Bruce after a space came slinking behind him with a whipped hanging look.

Both of them stared in silence for a moment at the lovers and then the eyes of Bruce turned toward the window. The shadow of a grim, faintly ironical smile curled the old man's lips. He made as if to speak, but paused abruptly, as though disdaining to ask the natural query, — how long had they been there. He glanced sharply about the room.

"Where's Akura?" he jerked out with a crackling suddenness that in that stillness seemed to shiver the air.

Allene started nervously. "I —— I'll go find her," she faltered and hastened to the rear of the house.

"Bring Orui too," harshly commanded the old man, "and be quick about it. He will be in the cook house."

"Yes, father," she murmured hurriedly and disappeared through the pantry door. Roderic was determined to betray nothing of the awkwardness he felt at the sudden disappearance of Allene. Galbraith continued to glare at him, and the large low room suddenly seemed too

small and too hot. Like a formless dark lump of earth or rock, there loomed before him the single question:

"What was the old man driving at — what was he going to do?"

For one exulting moment Roderic had felt that both of the other two men had been beaten. With the disappearance of Allene, however, a flock of ravenlike doubts all at once assailed him and seemed to darken the air about him. Allene had been the force that fixed him as by a natural law to reality and confidence. Without her he was again hovering uncertain in empty doubtful spaces. The batlike query came wildly dashing at his perplexed brain: Was Galbraith about to pack off both of them, Bruce and himself, and thus untie a tangled knot, as it were, with an ax? Cold beads of perspiration broke out upon his forehead.

"I'll not go," he told himself, as though hammering at his already shapen will with iron; "I'll not go! He can try it if he likes," — and with grim firmness he took two or three steps to the nearest window and stood gazing outward, his jaws set, seeing nothing. It was for either a moment or an eternity that he remained thus standing; he could not tell how long. His mind was a tumult of soundless voices, of dark, half-formed ugly fancies, of a rush and roaring as of distant waters. On a sudden through the silent and pulsating turmoil, from a remote distance, broke a harsh voice calling his name.

"Whitford —— Whitford!"

He turned and saw Galbraith jerkily motioning him to the long table at the upper end of the room. He was quiveringly awake in a flash now and firmly stepped forward. He saw Allene as he faced the room and with a bound his heart grew strangely light. He saw also Orui and Akura but they were merely faces and shapes swimming in the background of Allene. Galbraith stood be-

hind the table and Bruce with his two hands leaning on the end of it was pallidly intent upon its dark clear surface as though reading something. But there was nothing at all before his eyes.

"Allene! — Come here!" snapped Galbraith and with a gesture he summoned the two natives. Bravely, with a gentle hesitation at first, yet with a conquering intrepidity, Allene drew forward and stood near Roderic, intently, anxiously watching the face of her father. If there was emotion in that visage, the old man hid it successfully. Except for its redness it gave a strange impression of hard bluntness like the hammer side of an ax.

"Now, Bruce," sharply cried Galbraith, and after a momentary pause he added, with a biting tyrannical severity, "Marry them! — Marry them, I say!"

Those words seemed to have upon Roderic the effect of a crash of thunder. The blood was pumping in his heart and he actually saw flashes of light before his eyes. And suddenly he felt Allene leaning heavily against him; but an instant later she was standing erect — beside him — at the end of the table opposite Bruce.

The savage look of helpless bitterness on the face of Bruce, the solemnly curious glances of the natives, the momentary hesitation, — then the murmur of gabbled words all formed a throbbing farrago of agitation, a jumble of excited confusion that have ever remained obscure and chaotic in Roderic's memory. He only knew that a deadly seriousness charged the air, that the impossible had become the possible, that Orui's assurance and belief in miracles were now his assurance and belief. An intense desire to cry out something exultant, triumphant, possessed him, when the words, in the muttering, chunnering voice of Bruce, "— Man and wife!" suddenly arrested everything, like an enchantment. There was an instant of dead silence. The masklike face

of Bruce seemed to have disembodied before his eyes. Then swiftly he was aware of Allene's warm arms about him, and she was kissing him before all those people!

And just as his own arms clasped her fiercely, she broke away from him with a loud sob and threw herself upon her father in a tempest of weeping, as though shaken by unendurable grief. For a few moments she hung thus, clinging and quivering with sobs, while the old man glared stonily before him and then, as though unable to exercise control any longer, his gaze somberly drooped over Allene's head pressed against his breast. And he stood so for a space, his teeth set in his lower lip.

"Father — oh, father dear!" Allene's choked voice at last made itself heard articulately. "Forgive me — forgive me! You will forgive me, won't you?" He made no answer, but glanced away over her head.

"Forgive me, father — oh, say you forgive me!" she cried again in a frenzy of muffled speech against his breast.

"Ah, child," he answered finally in a voice hoarse, dulled and strangely quiet for him, "ye have a strong will, but why weren't you the lad Allan that I wanted to be born? It would have been the better for us both."

And that was all. Abruptly he then loosed his arms from his daughter and pushed her gently away. And lifting up her chin with a shaking hand, he gave one intent piercing look into her tear-wet eyes and turned sharply away. The word forgive was more than the self-willed old man could bring himself to utter. And in the native he commanded Akura to make ready and pack his things.

"But — where are you going?" Allene all but screamed out wildly, with she knew not what clamorous fears at her heart.

"I am going to Papeete with Bruce," he answered stiffly, and rigidly he stalked to the door of his room.

"With a cry Allene flung herself after him. And what passed between them there Roderic never knew.

The long shadow of a purao tree, central in the garden, flung itself with abandon at the feet of Allene and Roderic as they stood on the edge of the veranda watching the schooner growing smaller and more dim as it stood out into the westering sun on the broad expanse of the Pacific. The intense metallic blue was dazzling under the shimmer of the oblique rays. Except for the voice of the surf and the distant laughter of the natives merry-making on the beach an immense stillness reigned. Tears were glistening in Allene's eyes.

Why, when he shuts his eyes, this picture should stand out to Roderic more saliently than all else of that day, it is impossible to tell. But it was very perfect, very profound, graven with peculiar incisive subtleties. The stillness, the surf, the laughter, the fecundity and growth all about, the citrus grove with gleaming green and gold beyond the garden, the faint aroma mingled of tiare and frangipani, the declining sunlight, Allene, — it was perfection. It was all as if suspended and waiting, — for what?

Was it then that a shadowy nostalgia, nameless, incomprehensible, lightly clamped his heart for a fleeting instant? — Or was it later? The schooner was gliding into the distant sunset, toward the remote confusion of the world far away. What care could he possibly have had for the world in the midst of perfect bliss, triumphant well-being and felicity? Half-formed simmering images and fancies in his mind barely rose before they died again into the tender hushed melancholy of complete happiness.

As with one impulse the lovers clasped one another in a long embrace.

They slept that night in the room where Roderic first had lain as a broken castaway. For a long time he remained awake, moveless, his mind unable to bridge the gap between that far-off, incredible condition and the more incredible actual present. It could not possibly be real, and yet — there lay Allene at his side, in all her innocence and fragrant beauty. What a power resided in her slender frame. He was awed!

"Allene — Allene!" he whispered soundlessly. Her name upon his lips was all the answer to his puzzle.

PART III

THE CALL OF THE PAST

CHAPTER XVII

POSSESSING THE WORLD

"Roderic! — is this real or is it a dream?"

More than once that query fell from Allene's lips, and repeatedly he assured her that it was both. Who can describe a honeymoon?

They wandered about the island. They visited the natives in their dwellings and every hut was a house of feasting when they entered it. They spent hours that distilled away into eternity by the pool, and Allene insisted upon finding the spot where Roderic first had landed "broken by many waters," and the memory evoked her tears.

She wore and crowned him with garlands of canna lilies, tiare and scarlet hibiscus and paid tribute to Heaven for casting him up alive. Then she was arch, enchanting, with a playfully assumed arrogance as she pointed out his folly in trying to pass the island by when she controlled the storms, when she could by invisible cords and cables, like another Prospero and Miranda in one, bind and draw him to her side.

He in turn informed her that she was no better than a witch and lucky she had not been born in colonial New England. And he brought her news of her eyes, of her

swaying grace, of her sensitive tender mouth, her uncanny beauty, her power. It was scarcely fair, he told her, or decent, for one little mortal to have so much. And since she was both fair and decent, ergo she was not mortal: Q. E. D.

She parried solemnly by warning him to fear in that case the envy of the gods. For if she possessed all that — and she took his word for it — it was none of hers now, since she and all she had and was were his.

The glory and the splendor of life were theirs, and they swam in it more lightly than they swam in the waters of the lagoon.

At a burst they suddenly discovered that Roderic was imbued with a legendary quality among the natives.

In the huts, in the taro fields, on the lagoon, his strange fortune in landing shipwrecked from the sea alone, in coming to his love through the very gates of death, spread from Akura to the others and he was now the center of a legend. His conquest of Bruce, the bending of Galbraith himself before his will, since they could not comprehend the effect on the father of the night in the cave, — all these things crowded the full content of his legend. They looked upon him with affectionate awe. Orui, his sworn friend and proud in the friendship, reverently asked him to lead the singing of *himenes* in the chapel now that Tapena Bruce was gone.

It was in this case sheer unadulterated shyness and modesty that prompted him to refuse and to appoint Orui, as the oldest man on the island, to be the precentor. But the curious psychology of the natives took it for granted that Tapena Vitti-Fori, as they called him, was too important to do precisely what a lesser mortal like Bruce had done. The man to whom circumstances bowed down as to a prince could easily and as of right shape and

command circumstances. He was Thane of Glamis and of Cawdor too, long before he was aware of it.

Felicity, the cup of happiness, that is supposed to drug its recipients with its subtle liquor, had no such effects upon Roderic. It sent fires of energy dancing through his veins and the work of the island suddenly took a great forward spurt.

The word picnic, that had never figured in the natives' vocabulary theretofore, under the somber influence of Galbraith and Bruce, suddenly became a brightening, alluring catchword by the eager suggestion of Roderic. Like children who can give stores of energy to games, the natives plunged into the wild hilarious *pika-nika* of weeding the taro patches to a marvelous cleanliness, of rebinding the stem of every nut-bearing palm upon the island with fala leaves to prevent rats from climbing up and destroying the buds and clusters of tender young nuts; of cleaning out rain-water tanks, clearing away coconut husks, pruning, cultivating citrus trees, — endless small tasks at which the natives, ordinarily languid and perfunctory, now worked with jocund energy in the spirit of the *pika-nika*. Old Orui walked with a new pride upon the island. For was he not the trusted friend and lieutenant of Tapena Vitti-Fori?

"A new spirit truly has come upon the island," Orui declared to the natives at the huts when he passed or sat down for conversation. "That young Tapena Vitti-Fori has brought the gift of happiness with him. And now since he married the beautiful daughter of Tapena Galbraith he will be with us always. We shall no longer have to go back to our homes in Tahiti, in the Paumotus. This is that heaven that Brucee used to tell us about — but he didn't know how to bring it about."

Life was a dream then and a wild rejoicing to Roderic. His energy was exhaustless and the brimming happiness

inside him seemed like to burst his sides with its throbbing, palpitant volume. He would forget altogether that the island and all its works were not his, and go about its business like a patriotic general or a football trainer bent upon making everything and everybody work and appear at the point of perfection.

He would come home to Allene waiting for him, Allene fragrant and beautiful, with eyes like wells filled with adoration, and throw himself on the mat at her feet, sigh his profound contentment and breathe out:

"This is heaven, darling — it is too good to last."

"Why do you always say that?" she would protest with a tremor in her voice. "Why shouldn't it last?" Her youth and womanhood had an immense capacity for taking happiness for granted, as a normal state of being.

"I don't know," he would smile back. "I come from New England. If the day is bright there, old people shake their heads and guess it will rain to-morrow. If they have happiness in the house they pull the shades down and lock the doors and hide it away until it gets moldy. I think that's what they call the Puritan spirit."

"Then father would have made a good New Englander," would murmur Allene. "But we are not New Englanders or Puritans; neither are we old," and she would crouch down prettily on the floor beside him. "Oh, Roderic dearest, shake off New England as I have shaken off Scotland. Happiness is ours now. Let us enjoy every instant of it. It is so glorious just to be alive — we two together!"

And so Akura would sometimes find them like children, on the floor, and she would laugh joyously, and like a devoted affectionate dog she would caress them with her liquid eyes.

"I always keep forgetting that this place isn't mine,"

he confided laughingly to Allene on one occasion. "Queer, isn't it?"

"Not at all, dearest. That is exactly the thing to forget. I am so happy the whole world seems mine. And it is — because it's ours," she added cryptically.

When old Galbraith came back he appeared with precisely the same mien with which he had departed, save that he gave the impression of having perceptibly aged. Even after he had taken a survey of the island and had seen the work accomplished, his demeanor — cool, stiff and taciturn — remained apparently unchanged, except for a strange flicker in his eyes, red-rimmed from the sea. His speech was brief with a solemn curtness, as though he were readjusting himself to a new inevitableness, and he kept much to his room. His old magisterial manner, however, was definitely changed. Unconsciously or by design he somehow succeeded in conveying the notion that he was a guest in his own house, and a not altogether happy guest.

Allene, without saying much concerning her father to Roderic, hung upon the old man's eyes, watched him, showered him with affectionate attentions and carried on a running conversation at meals with a febrile anxiety to please him. She plunged like a plummet into things that might draw him out. She talked of the schooner, of Papeete, of the price of copra, of the new governor at Tahiti, of a hundred things. She never spoke of Bruce, however, or of the work of Roderic in his absence. A fierce piteous pride constantly checked her from touching upon that, yet she kept hoping her father would speak of it. But the old man was persistently stiff-necked, adamantine.

On the evening of the fourth day, however, after dinner, when ordinarily he rose to go to his room, he

glanced quizzically at Roderic across the table, and announced abruptly:

"Young man, I brought some clothes for you."

"Oh, father — you darling!" cried Allene, leaping from her chair to her father's side and throwing her arms about his neck. The sight of her tears against the old man's cheek suddenly stabbed Roderic with a nameless angry pain and he felt his own eyelids stinging. The floodgates seemed on a sudden to be loosened. Allene laughed and cried and called her father a dozen endearing names and made him appear one of the world's great philanthropists and benefactors. Finally Roderic felt compelled to speak.

"That's very good of you, sir," he muttered, "but — how am I going to pay for them?"

"You have paid for them," retorted the old man with a half-embarrassed crispness. "I have been looking over the island."

He said no more then but rose and with a cigar walked stiffly out upon the veranda.

The childishness of the old man on a sudden struck Roderic as a curious, newly discovered phenomenon. He had had no idea they were like that, he told himself, and a strange, half-kindly, half-humorous pity surged up in him. It suddenly struck him that the world was to the young, to him; that those going out of it are precisely as pathetic as the children newly come into it. That the very old are even more touching than the very young, because they are relinquishing what the young have not yet even beheld. Allene, still agitated by her emotion, wavered somewhat irresolute for an instant, wiping her eyes, when Roderic took her hand and followed the old man out upon the veranda. Galbraith stood gazing upward at the stars, silent, aloof, a lonely figure against the tropic night. The fragrance of the air was mingling

with the aroma of his cigar. The brilliant stars, so near, seemed careless of the feelings in human bosoms. In his white clothes he gave oddly the effect of a visitant from a distant place, some far planet, contemplating his return.

"Did you happen to notice, sir," Roderic spoke out boldly and his voice sounded unduly loud, "how we bound up the coconut trees against the rats?"

"Yes, lad — I did happen to notice that," came the crisp yet faintly derisive answer after a slight pause of abstraction. "In fact, I happened to notice everything," — with a fine ironic emphasis on the "happened."

Conversation languished promptly thereafter.

It was a strange period that followed for Roderic no less than for Galbraith. And yet the younger man was swept by gusts of resentment that even for the space of a moment should he ever be on the defensive.

Did he not work and toil from morning till night upon this man's estate? Did he not obtain results greatly superior to any that Bruce ever had? Why should he catch himself seeking the approbation of that harsh old man, from whom no approbation came? Was he, Roderic, still a convict toiling for board wages, when the work of the island seemed virtually to revolve about him? Memory brought him the analogy of Jacob's toil for Rachel and he told himself with indignation that Jacob's work was child's play compared to his. But the Rachel in the case, Allene, was able in those first months to blot out all resentment and all indignation by simply putting her arms about him, by resting her cheek against his or her head on his shoulder.

That was the period when he first found himself seriously analyzing the inscrutable power of woman, the power of Allene in particular, and he was lost in wonder

at the phenomenon. How did it come about and what was the essence of this mysterious influence? All his past came back to him and grotesquely distorted it seemed, for only that portion in which Allene figured loomed full and vivid, like a drama. What had gone before now appeared strangely foreshortened like a mere prelude. He was not philosopher enough at that time to group and label conclusions by names and categories, — or even to arrive at very lucid conclusions. He knew only that fits of resentment passed, that he could not now hate the old man who formerly had displayed so much hatred for him, that the feeling in his heart when he came from Allene was one of a half-humorous indulgence. His father-in-law must be indulged as a child is indulged when it is ill, or as some imbecile king is indulged in his declining years by courtiers who recall the past glories of the now waned and decaying spirit.

Galbraith, in turn, seemed to vacillate between moods of a stinging harshness and fits of abstraction, when he sat still and listless upon the veranda, gazing out over the lagoon, the reef and the ocean beyond; at the stellar infinities of the soft, mysterious nocturnal heavens; at nothing at all, at vacancy. It seemed inexplicable to Roderic then that these silent moods of Galbraith's should trouble Allene more than his eruptions of harshness. It was only later that he came to apprehend the greater pathos of the listless detachment which Allene was feeling intuitively.

As they sat of an evening reading by lamplight, Roderic, who was discovering and filling wide lacunae in his education by a sudden voracity for poetry, in which Galbraith's shelves were curiousy rich, he would burst out suddenly,

"Listen to this, Allene! —

'For I the ballad will repeat,
Which men full true shall find,
Your marriage comes by destiny,
Your cuckoo sings by kind.'

"It's absurd, but isn't it — isn't it —?" he could find no words to describe his pleasure in the sense and nonsense of the Elizabethan jingle. "Or hear this," he would rattle on delightedly,

"'Was this fair face the cause,' quoth she,
'Why the Grecians sacked Troy?
Fond done, done fond,
Was this King Priam's joy?'"

"Yes, dear — lovely," Allene would answer abstractedly, looking over her shoulder and with a murmured word of excuse steal out to her father, alone on the veranda, gazing at the constellations. Then the fine print of the double-columned Clark and Aldis Wright Shakespeare would blur and run together under his eyes and he would find that he was no longer reading but intent upon the problem of the somberly moody old man who was wilfully darkening his Paradise.

"What a damnable character!" he said to himself on one such evening. "And yet all those poetry books on the shelves are his. Could a man like that ever have felt a passion for poetry?" He came upon a volume of Burns, faded and thumbed with use, and to his amazement he found on the yellowing pages such stanzas scored and underlined as these:

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon
To see the woodbine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its love;
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Frae aff its thorny tree;

And my fause luver staw the rose,
But left the thorn wi' me.

Galbraith, crusty, harsh old adventurer Galbraith, had marked those verses! And in the lines to a mouse the words that were barred with lead like a dreary prison-house read:

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief an' pain.
For promised joy.

. . . . . .

But, Och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

It was a revelation to Roderic. He sat petrified for a time, lost in the wondrous maze of human nature. It was incredible. He clapped to the covers of the book, thrust it carefully into its place as though it had not been moved and joined Galbraith and Allene on the veranda. A brooding silence hung over the group, which he for one had not the temerity to break. But from him he felt exuding like a current an immense and foolish sympathy for the old man, all of whose emotions had curdled within him; whose life, now spent, was a tragedy. No word was spoken, but the night that enveloped them all seemed a tender, more intimate thing, symbolic of the common maternity that broods over mortal men, scattered everywhere on the face of earth and waters. Roderic now felt sorry for the father of Allene.

And almost like a reflection of his own smoldering thought the voice of Galbraith suddenly crackled through the soft gloom:

"You and I had better take up navigation seriously

to-morrow, lad. Both of us must know how to handle the schooner, I'm thinking."

A new existence began for Roderic from that time. He made the discovery that a hated subject like trigonometry, in which he had failed at the college entrance examinations, could become thrillingly interesting like a novel, if it entered saliently into the needs of one's life. With the earth for a sphere the spherical triangle took on a totally different meaning from that in the forgotten textbook.

Very solemnly, as though inducting him into the mystery of mysteries, Galbraith laid down the position of the island on the big general chart with a red cross.

"It's 136 degrees, 7 minutes, 10 seconds west," Galbraith enunciated the figures with incisive impressiveness, "and 15 degrees, 8 minutes south." And he leaned back, fixing Roderic with his eyes as though he expected him to shudder at the revelation. And, curiously, Roderic did thrill slightly, though it meant little to him at the moment. "We are just on the edge of the big equatorial current. They call it the Peruvian current off South America." And so step by step with the sextant and table of logarithms, with his own carefully worked-out charts and Findlay — the Epitome — sailing directories — Roderic was inducted into the science of navigation by one who despite his impatience proved an excellent pedagogue.

The occasion when Galbraith had abruptly lent him textbooks on navigation came back to Roderic suddenly during this period of cramming and he was lost in reverie. It seemed ages ago now. How did it happen? Had the old man been visited by a sudden glimpse of destiny, yielded to it, and then like a wrestler who seems thrown but has a last trick concealed, writhed upward and

swiftly assailed his adversary with his ultimate gasp? Was that it? He didn't know. He couldn't tell.

But — yes — marriage came by destiny. And for a man the name of destiny is woman.

He contemplated Allene with a new, more tranquilly meditative speculation.

This world pivoted about her. She was the center of it. And this world — was all the world, so far as they were concerned. How the aged hated to surrender it to their juniors! He felt himself very mature, very solemn, very wise. The yellow leaf of age, he felt, was almost upon him, so ripe was he in life's experience. And then he had the grace to laugh at himself as a strange quiver of emotion penetrated him. The world was well lost for the tender beauty and love of Allene. She was — ah, she was all!

Whether Allene had lost or gained in their common adventure it did not at that time even enter his head to consider. But he did glance with quizzical, searching looks at old Galbraith from time to time. Only traces of the former haughty mien, it seemed to him, remained upon that red, finely wrinkled countenance. There was a sort of hard, contracted peace upon it, — the bitter peace of resignation.

They sailed out of the lagoon upon the schooner that was now turned schoolship and Allene insisted upon accompanying them on most of the brief cruises. She stood or sat by, absorbed in the sextant work, in the calculations, absorbed with parted lips, watching the work, watching her men, yet constantly alert and by her very innocence putting a constraint upon her father, curbing his impulsive outbursts of passion, irritation at mistakes, at any signs of bungling or departure from perfection. Allene had but to stay behind for Galbraith to assume

a wholly different tone in the little combination cabin and chart house aft.

"That's what you make it — is it?" he would rasp out with a wild, sneering savagery. "Damn you for an idiot! What do they ever teach you in Yankee schools! Go over that again — do it over — and keep your brain on the job! — It can't be done with the bones of the skull!"

Roderic merely laughed, but not outwardly. He understood that it could not be pleasant to be relinquishing a kingdom, handing over one's world to a successor. And, oddly, the world seemed more brilliant to him after these outbursts of Galbraith, the sea and sky more vivid, radiant, the sun more dazzling. Life was bounding in his veins, and every hour was filled with the palpitant freshness of dawn. Circumstances, the stream of life itself seemed to be buoyantly carrying him on the might of its current, even as it was swirling over the feebly struggling resistance of Galbraith, — slowly submerging him. It was sad, but not as depressing as if it were happening to himself.

The first shock of a chill disturbance that Roderic felt that halcyon year was on the night when Allene, clasping his neck with a tremor of joyous rapture and a new, a solemn glory in her eyes, breathed a certain ancient revelation to him.

"What? — you!" he gasped foolishly, as though that were the first incredible thing he had learned of Allene. "My God!" And his chest felt suddenly empty as under an immense exhausting pressure and then as suddenly throbbing and chokingly full with a strange uncomfortable crowding of mingled emotions. Was he happy? No — yes! Was it aversion or joy that shook him? And then he gripped Allene tightly in his arms.

"Sweetheart!" he murmured incoherently. "You,

Allene — you — I can hardly — hardly ——" and he felt her hot tears against his face.

"Oh, Roderic, you do love me? You do love me, Roderic dearest?" she gasped in a muffled whisper. "You are not — sorry, are you?" — looking up quickly. "Oh, you will be glad, won't you?"

He does not remember what he said as he held her close. That she had only given him life and the world and love, and two or three other things besides, — but that aside from this hers was a niggard hand — and the like. She was, he remembered, laughing tremulously against his breast, and she and he and all life seemed inextricably fused together in a new and radiant glow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SMILE OF IRONY

Life was so brimmingly full that Roderic barely noticed the passage of time. He no longer thought of the episode of Jacob toiling for Rachel. He no longer thought of his daily work as toil at all. Like a child so occupied with its toys that it has "no time for play," he was so busily, absorbedly growing into the varied interests of his life that he had no time to think of happiness. From fits of depression and gusts of suppressed annoyance at old Galbraith, he had somehow emerged firm and solid, and by imperceptible degrees a curious change had come over their relative positions.

Instead of Roderic's saying to Galbraith, "Don't you think we'd better do taro and leave the trees till the end of the week," it was Galbraith who from his chair on the veranda would inquire with a dry casualness:

"What are you going to do to-morrow, lad?"

"Turn all hands into the taro patches, sir," Roderic would answer with a gay certitude. "Make a picnic of it. Have a big swim in the lagoon at the end of the day and a sing in the evening at the *fare himene*. Have a grand time."

"Ah," would comment Galbraith and nod his head slightly. What he thought Roderic didn't know and it didn't matter.

It is not that he was now impatient of the old; heaven knew he was not like that, — not another Galbraith.

Live and let live was his motto. But he felt mildly humorous at Galbraith's expense.

"Old putterer," he thought, as he walked gaily, springily in white, with his broad-brimmed Pandanus hat, down the avenue of palms to the beach or to the sheds, — "old putterer. He thinks he is running the show. He doesn't seem to realize that his day was yesterday. See him fussing in the garden with his scraggly rosebushes, things he can't yell at and that don't care a hang for his swearing — and he is just a poor old dub. I can draw circles round him even at that job."

And then a sort of half-ironical pity, a flush of shame, a dimly understood sympathy for the broken man would blow through his consciousness like a faint breeze. He thought, "He is getting old, the old boy, shaky on his pins. Yet he has fought his fight — not a bad fight in its way — now the old war horse is getting turned out to grass." Was everybody's lot like that, he wondered vaguely? No! — There was a lot of joy in life if you knew how to take it and were — lucky. Anyhow, even if everybody came to it, his, Roderic's time was still a long way, — a very long way off. And he whistled blithely as he walked across the white sands to the sheds.

Allene's baby and his had been born with an ease and safety that had given the lie to all of Allene's tremors and his own secret fears, with no help other than Akura's. Both Allene and little Margaret were doing splendidly and the tiny silken thing was incredibly accomplished and mature already.

It could crow!

Quite spontaneously and without any other stimulus than a ray of light, it lay in its cradle at the age of one month, a basket on rockers made by himself, its little fists flying in the air like two pink fluttering butterflies, and before you knew it, it had crowed!

Allene had run to its side in a burst of half-alarmed joy and all she saw was the seraphic inimitable baby smile on Margaret's face, the deliciously busy fists, and again she was thrilled by that crow. It was like a message from the Infinite.

Roderic happened to be in the room at the time. He never mentioned that he had himself felt a brief pang of alarm at that first shout of the small human being in its exultation at being alive and he drew swiftly near the cradle.

"Giving us the high sign," he interpreted with a startled laugh.

The look on Allene's face! That cannot be described. That is one of those slight shining threads that shimmer through the more massive tapestry of one's life. There was something in his throat so that speech was — superfluous. And Allene was shedding happy tears and laughing and smothering Margaret with kisses.

It flashed through his mind a moment later, as he turned away:

"Had Galbraith a memory like that of Allene when she was a baby? Could he have things of that sort stored in his crusty old bosom?" How could one believe it, taking all the sharp acidulous nature of the man into account? "Rusty plates," he said to himself laconically and left it at that explanation. But his own father suddenly came sharply into his thoughts, and for days would not leave them. His own father must have had at one time the same joy in him that he had in Margaret. And he had never written the tranquil taciturn man a line concerning his landing upon the island, or his marriage. That was something that smote him stingingly with a keen-edged contrition and self-condemnation. That was an omission he must repair at once, at the earliest minute. The next trip of the schooner — then he would be com-

pelled to leave Allene and Margaret; but they would have to get used to that. The next trip of the schooner — then he would in all probability be going alone!

The fact stood out like a guidepost, or rather a lighthouse. It was a stage achieved in the journey. He was — what could he call it? — full-fledged — a master mariner in life. The hot sun, the sparkle of the waters, the very trade wind seemed to feed him and to make his body and spirit expand. He seemed always now to be filled with a kind of quiet joyous tumult. Was it that heady champagne quality of life that made him appear possessed of more vitality than ever beside Galbraith, or was the old man visibly failing? For whichever was the explanation, the old boy was beyond a doubt appearing constantly weaker, more frail, more lethargic. He could sit for hours now on the veranda, silent, immobile, either gazing abstractedly into the distance or with his eyes closed.

"Queer!" reflected Roderic. "Who could ever have pictured the old man like that? — Must write that letter to my father," he concluded irrelevantly, in response to a little tug at his heart. It suddenly occurred to him — "How long have I been here?" This was — this was March — infernally hot, too. Lucky there were plops of rain. Nearly two years! — It seemed like two and twenty. And yet how joyously happy he was. "Is this real or is it a dream?" Allene's words at the culmination of their romance often came back to him.

She was not asking that question now, for she was troubled. Allene was troubled because her father seemed to have suffered his last and final disappointment when her child had proved to be a girl. Often the old man would gaze at little Margaret by the hour with an aloof speculative scrutiny of her smiles and rapturous gurg-

lings, and then he would turn away suddenly toward a distant cloudbank or the line of the surf.

When Roderic returned from Papeete in May, he found to his surprise that old Galbraith had seemingly taken on a new lease of vigor and activity. He was down on the beach in his blazing white drill, — with a new alertness about him, issuing orders in his taut and crackling voice, his eyes flashingly commanding as of old.

It was a shock to Roderic.

He had left his father-in-law in a state almost decrepit, relying, actually leaning in all things on him. Now the old man appeared again in the saddle, crisply greeting him with,

"Well, lad, I expected ye days earlier. What kept you so long?"

"Long!" Roderic exclaimed in bewilderment, "I didn't stay an hour more in Papeete than I had to. I think I discovered a new island, too. It's not on the chart. I'll show you where I marked it."

"Aye, very likely," muttered the old man indifferently. "Every inexperienced navigator discovers new islands hereabout — when he makes a mess of his calculations. You've hit upon one of the Paumotus, no doubt."

Roderic's face fell and also his heart. "I'll show you the chart, sir." Galbraith uttered a brief mirthless laugh.

"Time enough for that," he muttered. "There's Allene up there waiting. Your island will keep. It has kept some time, I'm certain."

All the triumph of the performance, of making the voyage by himself seemed to turn to ashes in Roderic's mouth. The eyes of the Paumotans glittered toward him for the sign that they might leave the schooner. He gave the word with an angry sharpness and without looking back hurried toward Allene.

Once he held Allene and little Margaret in his embrace, and heard Allene's glad tremulous laughter and looked into her eyes, all disappointment and dudgeon fell away from him and again he knew the meaning of joy. What did old Galbraith matter?

With Allene the world and its tumult and the cables and threads that bound the distant parts together faded to an ethereal remoteness, like the vague rumor in the hollows of a sea shell. With her was peace and divine contentment. Pictures of the far-away world without appeared dimly, only to dissolve into the happiness that dwelt in Allene's eyes, in little Margaret's babblings. The gustiness and savage quality of the earlier days had given way to the more intense even passion of anchored love, the morning light, the sunlit happiness.

That was something that old Galbraith could no more affect than he could affect the sunrise itself, or the somber splendor of the night that seemed hung like some secure, magnificent drapery to insure their bliss. No — nothing could affect that. And, indeed, the bubble of Galbraith's new mastery soon collapsed.

It began with some presents that Roderic brought. He had actually brought a present for every soul upon the island, including Galbraith himself. Trifling things, these presents were in many cases, a ribbon, a toy, an implement or cigarettes, but it was the first time any one had thought of doing such a thing. Perhaps Roderic was a little above himself in the glow of joy in the experience.

"Very bad practice!" had snarled old Galbraith after this surprising distribution at the steps of the veranda. "Very bad practice!" But the joy of the natives was great and more than ever Roderic became their idol. Orui with his new pipe went about from *fare* to *fare*, pointing out that only a man with the heart of a great

chief in him could be moved by a generosity so royal. He called attention to the fact that he had indicated as much theretofore, and that he could not be mistaken, since he was himself replete and throbbing with the blood of chiefs.

It was directly after this that Galbraith definitely and finally abandoned the business and work of the island to Roderic and confined himself, when he left the veranda at all, to delving and pruning in the garden in the early morning and late afternoon; to puttering, in short, — the only resource to a once active man. By contrast Roderic was a whirlwind of activity, up early and down late; on the beach, at the sheds; violently interested in producing perfect copra, in growing plenty of food, in keeping the natives happy in their childlike hearts, in achieving approximate perfection.

That was all well enough. But what he could not understand was the faint ironical smile upon the old man's lips at times, that gave it oddly the effect of being painted there. It was all as serious to Roderic as the hope of heaven to the pious, as victory to the general, as life itself. What was there in that to smile at? It perplexed and it annoyed him, too. Many years had to come and pass before he could understand that smile, of one whose life was already lived, at the mist of illusion that enshrouds the lives just commencing, — the smile of the past that has already outlived its future. A strange pathos seems to cling about that old man in Roderic's memory, and all his crotchety harshness, his bursts of intolerant irritation, remain in the memory only poignantly pathetic.

It was at the beginning of the very hot weather, in December of that year, that Galbraith, careless of exposure, was stricken after a walk down to the sheds,

was carried home and died in thirty hours without regaining mobility.

He had time to mutter thickly to Roderic:

"Don't be too active, lad, or ye'll get sick of it and have Chinamen running the place," — with the ghost of his old ironical smile. But to Allene, who was distracted with grief, he was very gentle.

"Don't mind, my lass," he whispered. "No use taking me to Papeete. I shan't get there. Live your life, lass, as you want it. That is the only satisfaction. Don't grieve. My voyage is made. I am weary for rest. Bury me up on the cliffs."

And so this old adventurer from Dumfriesshire was no less certainly gathered to his fathers on a distant tropical island than he would have been, had death overtaken him in his native Scotland.

CHAPTER XIX

THE AIR THAT KILLS

With the years that passed — how many years? Eleven? — Twelve? Who paused to count the years in the midst of happiness? — Roderic knew these things with intuitive certainty; he was master of the island, now *his* island; he was master of most of his environing circumstances and master, he believed, of his fate.

To master one's fate is always tragic. But the tragedy is mercifully hidden from the young by a glistening veil of illusion, and hence their absurd delightful happiness. Roderic had continued absurdly happy.

His island was prosperous as never before. The natives delighted in working for him, for he was a cheerful master and a kindly. The copra output had greatly increased. No hurricanes had come and few of the trees had died. Orui was still with him, that faithful gnarled old henchman, and also Akura. A new and a better schooner was his. He had found some large pearls. Comfort and happiness brooded over the island like tutelary deities radiating from the dazzling beauty of the sea and sky, from all the brilliant verdure of fecundity and growth.

"My little kingdom!" he said to himself and in his secret heart he was very proud.

In reading tales of chivalry to his little daughter, he was struck and engagingly fascinated by the manner in

which this leader or that one in the Crusades — the Godfreys, the Tancreds and the like — had carved out principalities for themselves. The carving out was what appealed to him. For does not every man, he reflected, great or small, clean or sordid, have to carve out his own domain in life? The remote, now legendary picture of his first landing upon the island, broken and wounded, cutting his way through the tangle, came swimming back to him mirage-like.

"And this is your principality, isn't it?" commented little Margaret, echoing his thought. "You carved it out, didn't you, daddy?"

"Oh — yes — yes, sweetheart," he answered half-abstractedly, half-gleefully, at her display of intelligence. "Right you are, Maisie mine. We are all carvers like those old boys; only we don't stop to think of it till a fairy girl like a certain Maisie I know comes along and points it out to us."

Whereat Maisie laughed with delicious pride in the sweep of her wisdom. And, "Mummy," she cried out joyfully, "this is daddy's principality and he carved it out for himself. Did you know that, mummy?"

"Oh, yes, dear," Allene, sitting near by in tranquil occupation with a needle, answered her. "I have known it all along." And she sighed gently. Her own share in the carving did not even occur to him then. Allene shone to his eyes as the day when first he had seen her. Only her beauty seemed richer and her happy tranquillity was like a balsam.

"Then why didn't you tell me, mumsy?" protested Maisie in pouting indignation. "As though I couldn't keep a secret!" And she was perplexed at the somewhat convulsive laughter of her parents.

Yes, Roderic was happy. Even his garden he had beautified beyond the dreams — certainly beyond the

achievement — of Galbraith. The new rosebushes he had brought from Tahiti were prospering less than they might, but on the other hand he had made more of the dark-tongued flaming hibiscus bushes and had set out fresh frangipani trees. The crotons were better distributed, with a richer symmetry, and he had conquered that beautiful and spiny pest, the Lantana, that formerly had tended to overcome all of Galbraith's efforts.

"Those roses!" he said to himself irritably. "If only I had some good Massachusetts earth for them!" But he had enriched their soil as best he could with fertilizer and they were, in any case, better than they had been in Galbraith's day.

It was in the late afternoons that he toiled in the garden, when the flowers seemed to emanate a farewell fragrance before the coming of the night. So rich and delicate was the aroma, infinitely soothing yet faintly disturbing that — that it brought fancies to one's head — nameless fancies — hardly to be described. It was a vague feeling — was it an unrest? — like a tiny insect in a solid board drilling, drilling ever so faintly, into his consciousness, — small, light, insistent, causing a far off uneasiness, a remote nostalgia.

Nostalgia? For what? It was long since he had received that letter from his father in response to his own announcing his marriage, that classic letter from his father that remained graven in his mind.

My Dear Son: (it ran)

I was glad to hear from you, though you can hardly expect me to approve of your course. It seems no wilder than I had come to expect of you. However, since you have made your bed, I suppose you must lie in it. Since in the words of the blessed Prayer Book you have left undone those things which you ought to have done, and done those things which you ought not to have done, I can only hope that at least now

you will "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." — Ecclesiastes XII.13.

Your stepmother and I are fairly well, praise God, and we both wish you happiness.

Your father,
SWITHIN WHITFORD.

That letter had brought an odd sort of rankling to his heart, a kind of humorous melancholy like the snub of a child to whom one was making affectionate advances. It somehow recalled Galbraith.

"That's that," he had muttered to himself with a laugh, after he had read the missive. But it was not "that" at all. It was something else. It was a wide, a hopeless gulf that brought fitful trains, fragments of thought. How endlessly different are people of the same blood! Could he conceivably write that way to little Margaret, even across seas of shame and blood? Indifference? No! That was one thing he was not capable of. Anger — fury — yes. But not indifference. A passionate stirring of the very fibers of his being, a very tremor of hot love for his wife and child, flesh of his flesh, his very life, had shaken him like a gust of wind. But that was now nine or ten years ago. It was after that letter that he had thrown himself into the feverish activity of life and work in which he had never paused or flagged.

"Never let up!" he told himself with American vigor. "Keep everlastingly at it." He had planted more cocoanut trees, more taro and breadfruit. The citrus grove was largely increased. The golden oranges were gleaming richly in their setting of verdure. The barren Paumotu atolls paid high for oranges, which they could not grow on their reefs as he could grow them on his "high" island. With comparative ease he had obtained as much labor as he wanted.

He was always giving his people holidays and half-holidays and yet getting more work out of them than he believed others could have done, by sheer enthusiasm. There was a bonus system he had introduced which had proved a great success. At the end of the year a family might receive a sewing machine, or a phonograph or yards and yards of cloth as a prize for high productive power. One day he hoped to have a motion-picture machine. Yes, in his little world, Vitti-Fori was as surely king as though his ancestors had clubbed its people into submission.

And the acquisition of the eighty-ton schooner from the drunken Captain Langley at Fagatau, — but that was something he had no desire to dwell upon. The poor drunken beast was doubtless better with the smaller boat. He must have piled her up by now on some reef, — as he surely would have piled up the *Allene*. It was a perfectly fair exchange. Langley was mad for ready money. The *Allene,* black against the dazzle of the beach, was a beauty.

There were now little iron rails leading into the large copra-shed for the trucks to be wheeled out into the sun with the trays, and the price of copra was holding firm. The peculiar smell of the white coconut flesh was a perfume to his nostrils. He stood as well with the French authorities at Papeete as Galbraith had ever stood. No one ever bothered about his island, and that was good.

The rumor of the great war had reached here as in every other corner of the world, but it was scarcely more than a rumor. It was an European affair. For a time, to be sure, the seas were unsafe and there was a persistent fear of raiders said to be scouring the Pacific. There were some new formalities at Papeete concerning "papers." But in time the alarms subsided. The raiders

had been swept away and the price of copra was rising. Yes, life was rich.

For his home life was even more perfect than the rest. No other children had come to them, but with Allene and Maisie, — what a perfect trio of love! Intellectually one did not stagnate. There was reading aloud, tales and stories for Margaret, history and poetry to Allene, though Allene and he were as much absorbed in "Ivanhoe," knight-errantry and fairy tales as was little Margaret herself. A halcyon life in the midst of a Paradise!

> Some unsuspected isle in the far seas,—
> Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas.

He came upon the lines in "Pippa Passes" and paused with a thrill and a catch in his throat at their beauty.

"Doesn't that describe it, Allene?" he almost shouted, with a laugh.

"If only it could last like this forever!" Allene nodded her lovely head with a grave radiance. His own words of some years past. It was now his turn to cry, "Nonsense, darling!" he leaped from his chair and kissed her.

"Why shouldn't it last? Don't go getting notions, Allene. You are too wise for that."

"Foolish me!" Allene murmured contritely and held him closely for an instant with her arm about his neck. Curious — that a woman should "settle" so after marriage.

The garden was in a way the crowning achievement. He had paid little attention to it at first. But when once its state of comparative neglect smote his eyes, he had thrown himself into it with his accustomed energy and had changed it magically in a very brief space of time. It was on the trip when he had last taken Allene to Papeete that he had brought the roses. Only twice in

all those years had Allene aaccompanied him. She would not take Margaret, or leave her. The heartache and anxiety were too great. He no longer urged her to accompany him. To tell the truth he was himself unhappy at the thought of leaving Margaret alone with Akura. Akura was growing old, — and after all she was a native.

The roses simply would not flourish. In the midst of a richness of fecundity, a luxuriance of opulent growth, where it was said your cane would flourish if stuck into the ground, and its iron ferule take root, the roses seemed to droop and pine, — like creatures in exile. He longed with an absurd concentration to see them rich and full and beautiful, and yet they appeared somehow sickly and dissolute. Their fragrance was faint and their petals would shed at a touch.

" No stamina," he murmured to himself, hardly knowing why so trivial a fact should depress him out of all proportion to its significance. And those same roses it was that led to an episode bringing the first genuine gloom into his new life.

He had been putting wands into the ground and tying the plants upright with pandanus fiber, making the most of their little familiar fragrance, when on a sudden the vague thistledown brushings of undefined unrest, the faint worm-drill of nameless nostalgia solidified, took shape and substance with arresting weight and a curious clutching grip upon his consciousness.

The scene before him faded into a blurred darkness and before his eyes, unseeing all that was about him, lay stretched in a mysterious somber beauty the garden of his father, with its spread of color, of a duskier, less dazzling richness than his own hibiscus and frangipani, — its haunting aromas, so little obtrusive and yet so poignantly acute! A wide demesne it lay before him, — of roses velvety, and royal peony, of purple phlox so

beautiful it clamped his heart to the point of aching. The rose lavender of cosmos, with its delicate firm flowers, seemed to wave before his eyes in a sort of aloof mockery. And through it all the ghostly fragrance of clematis and honeysuckle and the purer essence of the phlox came in waves about him. The box hedge enclosing all, the old mulberry tree brooding in the center, — how sound it all was, how perfect and how beautiful! His head swam. He shook himself suddenly like a dog upon emerging from the water.

"Good Lord!" he said to himself aghast. "What's come over me?" He stared about him in a dazed bewilderment. He stood stock-still; he moved swiftly, aimlessly, about the garden and again stood still. Then, without quite knowing why he left the garden, abruptly he began walking down to the beach, paused, faced about and walked back. It was not into the house, however, that he went, but up the hill to the pool and the stone.

For the first time in his life on the island, however, he was actually unaware of either pool or stone. Through the brush and jungle he continued half in a dream, yet with a machinelike energy in his limbs, down to the western side of the island where the reef and beach were joined, where years — an age of time — before, he had been cast up from the sea. Without thought, yet tingling at every nerve, he sat down upon a log and stared before him at the cobalt expanse of the Pacific.

Staring and listening he sat there, watching the long oily undulations of the azure sea, listening to the surf beating beneath his feet, listening to the silence. In his mind was no thought, only a vague troubled uneasiness. Gradually, without his being quite aware of the process, pictures were forming in his mind, spasmodic disconnected scenes of his earlier life as a sailor: his young-eyed wonder at Suva and in Australia — Billy of Bangor,

Flitch and the *Alice* — the day on the Boston wharves. Then without volition the floating tentacles of his mind seemed to fasten as by inevitable attraction upon his boyhood home at Adams Rock: the lamplit room — that garden with its northern calm and shadowed beauty — the darkly vivid hedge — the drip and shade of the mulberry — the garden!

It was as though he were intent upon something wholly different, some other employment or preoccupation, and those scenes and pictures forced themselves before his mind's eye, unbidden, forbidden. His landing upon the island, however, the culmination of all that past, was wholly and, it seemed afterward, strangely absent from these obtruding visions. Only an obscure, confused sense of guilt clung mistily about them all, like some nebulous drapery swaying and blowing.

How long he sat there he was not certain, but it was long after darkness overtook him and the young moon, riding high over the ocean and silvering a track of fantastic splendor, careless of any human eye, suddenly smote him with a consciousness of something like erring truancy. He leaped up and turned homeward.

Allene was still sitting up and he greeted her with something forcedly cheery, muttering a word or two of his "rambling around like a bat in the night," to which she responded monosyllabically. But her eyes followed him intently.

He went to bed and awoke to a brilliant morning with an eager desire for work. He was at the copra-shed before Orui and the others had got there. He paused long enough to reflect abstractedly on his strange obsession of the preceding evening and on a sudden he found himself laughing at his own absurd vagary.

"Moonshine!" he murmured whimsically to himself and, as Orui came trudging toward him with a greeting,

he began with bright energy the exposition of an idea on how to improve the quality of the copra.

"You see, Orui," he explained, "the better the copra, the better our reputation and the bigger the price. That means a bigger bonus for all hands, eh, Orui?"

Orui declared he understood perfectly and threw himself with his usual faithful alacrity into the ideas and wishes of his master and friend.

"After all," thought Roderic, as he left the shed an hour later, "there is nothing either so real or so exciting as the price of copra!"

The old tenor of his life went on from that hour, the work of his island all day long, with a persistent activity that belied old Galbraith's prediction that Chinamen would be running the place if it continued, — and the pleasant domestic life of evenings. He resumed the readings aloud with energy, "Robin Hood" to little Margaret until bedtime and Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" to Allene. It was some weeks later, when his ear grew tired of Gibbon's grandiose periods, that he took up a tiny book of verse, "The Shropshire Lad," and read the simple lyrics to Allene. He had scanned them himself some time earlier and now on a sudden he craved them as an antidote to Gibbon. He felt sure that Allene also would enjoy their clear simplicity.

He read half the small book without pausing, except for brief comments, skipping here and there and only glancing up now and then for the answering look of Allene's appreciation. Then he came upon two quatrains that ran ——

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows;
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

He had read it in the same voice he had read the others, but his pause after it was inexplicably longer.

"Wait a minute," he said, with a strange excitement in his voice, "I'll read that again."

He reread the plain, unadorned verses and somehow every word seemed to catch like a barbed hook in his heart. He could hardly utter the last lines, his voice, thickened over them so — peculiarly. He did not go on. He started suddenly from a brown study of which he had been unaware. "And cannot come again." The words seemed to reverberate through all his being.

"By George! By George!" he muttered somewhat thickly. "Don't think I'll read any more. Time for bed." He got up and walked aimlessly twice or thrice about the room. On a sudden he paused behind Allene, bent over quickly and kissed her hair. He did not see her face. But on the back of her hand, which lay motionless in her lap, he thought he saw something glistening — a tear? Well, those verses were — stunning! He went into his room and to bed. It was some time before Allene came in.

No word was exchanged between them that night.

CHAPTER XX

THE RETURN OF BRUCE

He felt lackadaisical and curiously abstracted the next morning. In his mind the lines of Housman, "Into my heart an air that kills," were forming into a sort of song to a strange melancholy tune that he had not heard for twenty years, — something that he thought was the tune of "Tell me not in mournful numbers." All that day the words of the quatrains hummed themselves inside him to their dirgelike melody. Oh, it was damnable! Why should a sound man be built like that?

He walked down to that spot on the western side of the island as the only way to shake off the absurd, exasperating mood and gazed emptily at the ocean, at yon far country of his suddenly corrupted imagination. What did he see? Nothing — he could not have told. A confusion of fragmentary scenes, pictures dissolving, a nameless farrago, a northern garden, — of all asinine things to bother about!

The mood then gradually waned, but only to return. He found himself, at the back of his demesne, sitting there for minutes or for hours and gazing outward. He went to Papeete and he returned, but always he would fall back into the habit, like a vice, of going out, always alone, unaccompanied. It was like a small shameful secret, and he hated it and himself. Why couldn't he speak of it to Allene? But somehow he could not. America, he heard, had entered the war and for a moment

he thrilled to the thought. But it was an affair of volunteers, for unmarried youngsters. Even if he were there — with a wife and child — it was scarcely likely to reach him. It was very remote. His orbit was fixed. It hardly touched his thoughts as he gazed out from his station seaward.

One day, as he was returning in the dusk along the path that his own footsteps had by this time beaten down, he saw a single figure hurrying on before him through the brush. Instantly he knew it was Allene.

His first impulse was to pause and let her reach the house before he ventured farther. But he felt instinctively that that was futile. Allene knew. She must have known all along. If Allene had caught him in something vicious, he could not have been more contrite, more painfully ashamed. Nevertheless he quickened his steps and followed her. But Allene was also hurrying fast. She had reached the crest of the slope.

"Allene!" he called after her. She hurried on more swiftly. "Allene!" he cried again. "Wait! Wait, dear!"

She paused, and it happened to be near the stone, the old Wishing Stone of their early years. She paused and turned slowly toward him, but with gaze bent downward as though she were the culprit. He hastened his steps toward her, and as she lifted her eyes he saw they were filled and streaming with tears. He gripped her tightly in his arms.

"Allene!" he murmured in abashed, shamefaced misery. "I — I didn't know you — you knew — minded my — walks — alone — helps me to think — to turn things over ——" and he stopped helplessly. He could not talk that way to Allene. She was weeping softly against his shoulder.

"You — you know, don't you, dear, ——" he began

again, but she put a cold hand over his lips and shook her head pathetically.

"Don't say anything, dear," she sobbed softly, piteously. "I know — everything —— I know. Let us go home!"

They walked on in silence, he with his arm about her, his heart thumping achingly against his ribs. And yet there was within him a sensation of vague relief. No more of this sickening concealment. But what was it Allene knew, or understood, when he hardly understood himself?

In the house little Margaret greeted them with a fountainlike jet of eager inquiry.

"Where have you two been all this while without me?" she came bounding forward and hung about them. "What's the matter, mummy? Oh, you haven't been crying, have you?" And she glanced up to her father's face. "Something in your eye? Let me see it, mumsy. I can get anything out of people's eyes. My hand is so steady. I got something out of Akura's eye only last week."

Allene and Roderic signalled to each other piteously with their eyes and Margaret was no doubt taken in, for she chattered on with no sign of disturbance. She was off to bed finally with the usual ritual of hugs, kisses and "sweet dreams," and they drifted back into the long living room, lamplit and dim in the far corners.

Now at last the floodgates would be opened. They would talk. They must talk! He must say something. But — what could he say?

What *could* he say? How could he explain or even touch upon this growing longing, this mad desire to go away from Allene and Margaret? He had all the instruments of happiness, all that man could wish for, —

activity, work, success, plenty, love. He was living in a Paradise and he wanted —— what? Moonshine!

"How —— how that child is growing," he finally blurted out and felt the shame of inadequacy after a great effort, like an athlete who funks his hurdle. There was a momentary quiver about Allene's lips and then she replied with a febrile energy,

"And such a lovely nature! —— So generous and full of enthusiasm! She thinks of everybody and everything. Akura thinks she is taking care of her, but really she is taking care of Akura. She knows the place for everything —— she can find anything ——" Allene's hands were clenched, so that her knuckles showed white as she ran on rapidly, until on a sudden her lips twitched and abruptly she moved out to the veranda.

Roderic started to follow her but a heavy load of misery seemed to press him down into the nearest chair.

"Lord, what can I say to her?" he demanded of himself with harsh self-torture. "A garden? ——" he fell aghast before the very thought, the jejune inadequacy of the thing. "My father's old garden —— why should that take such hold on me? Why should I care? Yet I seem crazy to see it, to stand there again ——I must be going daft — daft!" Spasmodically he clapped his hand to his forehead. It was damp with perspiration. With an effort he forced himself to rise and follow Allene out to the veranda. She was leaning with both hands upon the railing and gazing upward. He stood beside her in silence for a space, his heart beating furiously, his throat dry.

"Those stars," he felt as though talking in a cloud of dust, "they look as if they were at home here." What an effort it had suddenly become to talk to Allene — of all people!

She nodded her head and continued gazing upward.

"The pull of home!" Suddenly, as with a little explosion, the phrase burst into his mind, and instantly he fought it with ferocity. That phrase, like a bright light, abruptly illumined Myrtle Thornley, his boyhood; all his past loomed rich and golden.

"This is my home!" he said to himself, or a voice within him seemed to be quarrelsomely, hotly arguing. "What's that other to me? — My father's letter!" He remembered every word of it. "What do I care?" The voice persisted doggedly.

But even at that moment he knew that the roots of the past were dragging at his being like chains and cables. He groaned inwardly.

"Oh," he thought miserably, "is it because I broke away so sharply that it pulls on me so hard — dragging — dragging — of all things the beastly garden! —— If I could only see it!"

Instead of drawing nearer, he seemed farther than ever away from speech with Allene. A profound misery of shame engulfed him. Yet there beside him was standing Allene —— his Allene!

On a sudden he seized her shoulders and pressed his hot cheek to hers and so they stood for a time in a tumult of strange emotions, overawed as though in the presence of mysteries. It was a new revelation of life, torturing, inexplicable.

By a sort of tacit agreement they moved indoors in silence. They could not talk. —— No, they could not talk.

The next day and the next he went about his work with a kind of galvanized energy, with burning eyes. What was he, what had he accomplished, he inquired harshly of himself in gusts of self-depreciation? In the youth and headiness of his blood he had labored ferociously — in his way — and what was the upshot

of it all? Who would ever know or hear of him? He was a prisoner of life, not its master; nobody; an insect crawling in the infinite void between heaven and earth.

No strong man was ever a prisoner of life. No!

The astonishing thing to him was how persistently not only the thought of going remained with him obdurate, but how surely his entire attitude embraced the idea, took it for granted. He was actually shaping the work, the routine of the island to the possibility, the certainty, of his going!

"A man must have an organization that can function whether he is there or not," he told himself. And more and more he guided the work, Orui, and the other younger men, so that they should know their tasks whether he was there to initiate them or not.

He fondly believed that Allene was unconscious of any of that. It hurt him to conceal and yet he was developing a cunning technique of concealment. It was only long after that he knew that nothing was concealed from Allene.

The problem that troubled him most was the matter of the schooner. If he were to take the schooner away, and anything happened to him in the distance, then Allene was almost certainly cut off on her island. That was a condition unthinkable. He paused upon that thought and it racked and tortured him for days. He hit upon a plan finally, however, that seemed to dispose in a manner of that difficulty.

He would take the schooner with the smallest possible number of men to Papeete, and there he would leave her in charge of the consul and the harbor master, and find work for the men.

If the consul did not hear from him by a given time, say ten months or a year, he was to find a skipper and a crew, including at least some of his own Kanakas, who

knew the island, and send the boat to Allene, — together with a letter which he would prepare. That would make clear to Allene her resources and what she was to do.

His very soul seemed to darken at the thought of such a procedure: Allene in the remote impersonal hands of consuls and public officials; Allene who had looked with matchless confidence for all things to him! The thought was unbearable. Yet, the very next day his mind was revolving the many sides and angles of the plan. It was the only way, the best way. Men were constantly obliged to arrange, to plan like that. Men could not be tied like mules by a tether. Besides, that was merely a kind of insurance. Why should he not return in far less than any such provisional period? But why was he going at all? —— Ah, that — that no longer admitted of argument, of questions or answers. That was as inevitable as doom. Yet the thought of the actual step itself ate into his vitals like a cancer. And he had believed himself to be master of his fate!

A shout that came from the beach and startled the workers at the copra house like a cry of alarm suddenly arrested every ear, eye and hand within its sound.

Roderic, who had been bending over a copra tray with a perspiring face, looked up sharply and what he saw alarmed even him. There were still legends of mysterious raiders on the seas, though it was long since any had actually been heard of.

A trim black schooner, almost the counterpart of his own, save that she was smaller, was rounding the point of the reef with just enough sail for draught, and with complete assurance she was standing in for the lagoon. Her canvas glistened white in the dazzling sun and everything and every one on her exceedingly trim deck stood out brilliantly. A man in white drill was standing negligently on the forepeak with his hands in his jacket

pockets and about midway in the lagoon he issued a brief order. Her bit of white was magically furled and down dropped the anchor with a splash. Gently then the boat swung around to her cable like a turning duck on a pond, and before you knew it she was at rest, pointing her nose peacefully outward.

The natives in a frenzy of excitement like children pelted madly to the beach. Roderic remained alone at the shed, gazing on the manoeuvres as if spellbound.

"Whoever he is," he muttered to himself, "he makes himself at home here. A trader — or a buyer." It was years since any one had put in at the island.

Then with a nonchalant air but with a disturbing fever in his limbs, he too strolled down to the beach.

A dinghy came gliding to the pierhead with the white man in the stern sheets propelled by four Kanaka oarsmen, probably all his crew. "Style," thought Roderic.

The white man, he saw even before the natives shouted it out, was Bruce McClung.

His first impulse was a savage one, of fierce contemptuous anger, to warn him away from the island. But that was only momentary, like a dancing shadow.

"If he can afford to come here," he thought ironically. "I can afford to receive him. Wonder what brings him here." Then swiftly the thought of Allene flashed into his mind. Allene must not remain for an instant unwarned. He caught a native boy of fourteen by the shoulders.

"Run to the house," he told him brusquely, "as fast as you can, find Akura and tell her to tell my wife that Bruce has come."

The boy was off like a dart.

It was only later he learned that no sooner had Akura imparted her intelligence than Allene paused, stood still

for a moment and then for the first time in her life fainted dead away.

Bruce was engagingly frank and debonair as he leaped lightly from the skiff to the hot boards of the pier.

"Hello, Whitford!" he called out genially, and though he did not put out his hand he somehow contrived to give an impression of friendly heartiness before the staring natives.

"What brings you here?" cried Roderic in a voice in which a sort of loud hollowness conceals the want of warmth among civilized men.

"Frankly" — Bruce began nearly every sentence with "frankly" — "I wanted to see the old place again. I was in the neighborhood. Besides — I buy things, copra, shell, anything. These are times of high prices and quick turnovers — as you know," he added suavely.

"A real trader," reflected Roderic. "He has no shame." Aloud he said.

"Yes, I know. But as you know, I have my own boat and ship my own product." He revelled childishly in the possessive pronouns.

"Oh, yes, of course," Bruce responded easily, looking over Roderic's shoulder toward the house. "But, frankly, I might save you a trip. Why should you jam the schooner to Papeete when — if I can make it worth your while to — to sell to me?"

In Roderic's heart like adamant was forming the resolution to transact no business with his quondam enemy. Was he come back as a kind of nemesis to haunt his life — and at this time? But on a sudden all the darting and whirring of these thoughts in his brain was stopped as might be a clockwork mechanism. Like a bar of iron came this single chillingly prominent idea thrusting in the midst of the arrested apparatus of his mind:

Bruce might carry him to Papeete, the first stage of his journey, without his taking his own schooner away at all!

That meant greater security for Allene. For at a pinch, if need were, the Kanakas could sail the boat to the nearest of the Paumotus. Allene would have the boat. It was a heavenly solution of his perplexing problem.

But — trust himself in Bruce's hands? Well, why not? Was he afraid of Bruce? That was absurd. But what to do with him in the meanwhile?

"Well," he finally emerged from the stirring activity of his silence, "let me think it over. You go down to the shed with Orui — you know your way — and look things over. I must run up to the house. I'll come down there in a jiffy." Allene's name had not thus far been mentioned between them.

With a rapid nervous step and head bowed, Roderic then struck out toward the house. His mind was churning like a mill race. The sudden and strange appearance of Bruce created a diversion in midst of the tension of their lives. But abruptly it had also brought forward a climax, — forward to a cruel starkly naked prominence. How Allene would take it — what would happen — those were the queries that kept dancing about in his brain in a medley of kaleidoscopically changing lights and shadows. But there was a driving intoxication in his blood that flooded him madly and made his heart beat furiously. To-day would settle it all, — everything.

Allene was reclining on the white bed in her room and her pallor was visible even in that dim curtained light. That gave a brief poignant stab to his heart. Margaret was beside her mother, chattering softly and soothing her mother's hand.

"Run out into the garden and play," he told her hurriedly; "or feed the hens —— I want to talk to mummy."

"Yes — daddy — " her voice was pitifully subdued like a muted string, and she who was all gayety, like the very spirit of joy, looked at him with the searching, baffled eyes of childhood caught in the maze of uncomprehended grown-up troubles, a picture that remains to haunt the grown-up eyes for long afterward.

Allene smiled faintly, with an effort. He kissed her, for with an ache in his heart he felt instinctively what that smile cost her.

"Isn't it queer his coming here," she murmured gently, with constrained self-control. "What does it mean?"

"Oh — he!" It seemed a great effort to talk of Bruce now. "He's a trader — buying things, copra, shell. Come to snoop around — see what he could pick up." She shook her head slowly and looked into her husband's eyes. What he thought she meant was,

"You couldn't do that, Roderic, if you had left this place under similar circumstances."

"He's a born trader, all right," he said, as if answering her, with a brief laugh. "But what can you do? You can't drive people off the place with a shotgun. If he can afford to come — I guess we can afford ——" and again he laughed briefly.

"We must have him up of course — we couldn't treat him like — like ——"

"Oh, certainly!" he caught her up. "Nothing else to do — and unless he has sense enough to sleep in his boat, we'll have to give him a bed, too, if he's staying."

"Of course," she murmured with a barely audible intensity of tone and a strange new gleam in her eyes. For a moment perhaps she was thinking that this episode might divert Roderic from his purpose. But the very next instant she was swiftly disillusioned.

"You know," he pursued quickly yet with a kind of

pressing heavy soberness. "His coming this way gives me an idea. I want you to listen, dear, because there's something that's been bothering my head a good deal. It needn't worry you because I've thought everything out carefully — thought all around it." She lay perfectly still, watching his face with a tragic intentness.

"I've got to run over home," he went on quickly after a pause. "Been thinking of it a good while. The war, you know — it makes a man feel like — like a cad ——" yet, though he meant every word he said, he had never before felt so much like one as at that moment. A strange unfamiliar person was speaking through his lips, some one else, — some one he despised abjectly, held in deepest contempt and loathing. Allene's lips trembled faintly and her eyes on his were unfathomably tragic. No, by Heaven! it was not he — and yet he went on — not he — some one else —— "I don't suppose I can do anything, but I want to be there. They wouldn't want me, anyway — married man and all that. Want to see my father, too." Ah, that helped, that about the father. That made it a shade easier. "Ought to do it — it's been growing upon me."

Could he tell her of the bizarre folly of the garden; of this nameless pull that drew his heart even though it clung to her? No! Of that he simply could not bring himself to speak. That was something hidden, obscure.

"The problem," he ran on more feverishly "was what to do with the schooner. Of course, it won't be for long, but to leave the schooner in Papeete —— I didn't like to do that, you see? Now — this Bruce coming — happy accident. Go with him to Papeete," he pursued, simulating an air of happy triumphant solution. "The schooner remains here — and I'll be back before you know it!" His brain, all his body, reeled as after a tremendous effort.

He touched her hand. It was cold as ice. Her breast heaved as if in pain, but she uttered no sound. Now, he thought, for the paroxysm, the crisis. Needlelike points of heat broke out over all his body.

"Of course you'll have to go, dear." He was startled as by some sudden explosive manifestation of nature. It was Allene's voice, her accustomed voice, dry yet soft as always. He could not credit his ears. "That's natural. But how are you going to get back, with the schooner remaining here?" That's natural, she had said — natural!

"How? trust me for that!" he cried out, with a burst of shrill almost hysterical laughter throwing back his head. "I'll manage that all right. Always somebody — a trader or some one — make it worth his while —— I'll get back all right!"

A moment before he had seemed in the grasp of the abyss, in a hopeless struggle with tragic dreariness. But she took it like that! He seemed to himself to be floating upon lifting waves of sunlit exuberance, intoxication. "Oh, that will be easy!" he laughed again. "I'll be back right enough — before you have time to miss me much — that's simple enough."

Only a dull underlying pain within him, beneath all the laughter and all the words, steeped his triumphal solution in the color of dark misery. He rose abruptly, then bent forward and kissed Allene hurriedly.

"Must get down to Mr. Bruce," he muttered against her cheek. And just as he was about to lift his head, Allene's arms suddenly enclosed and drew it toward her heart. The tears gushed from her eyes and a storm of deep sobs shook her.

"Oh, Allene, — Allene!" he protested frenziedly, miserably. "I thought you were going to be brave and sensible." And how he hated himself as he uttered the

words! Only her heart-rending sobs were audible for the space of perhaps, a minute. "If you feel that way," he began dully.

"Go, go, Roderic. Please leave me —— I'm all right," she cried with sudden volcanic energy, releasing him. "Go down to Bruce and ask him up. Don't mind me — it's only — do go, dear," and she turned spasmodically toward the wall, waving him away with her hand. He gazed at her as through a cloud of smoke for an instant, then softly he stole out of the room.

And the Roderic that walked down the flagstoned colonnade of palms had never before set foot upon this island. He was a stranger, an outcast from distant parts, walking for the first time on alien unfamiliar ground.

PART IV

MAISIE

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT

On the steamer to San Francisco the rising and fading of the island home to his mind's eye went on like a play which he watched at times with the air of a detached spectator.

At times his heart would suddenly stretch back toward Allene and Maisie with the sharp acute pains of ineffable longing. And then he would plunge into eager conversation with men in the smoking room or with some woman on deck, and all would recede and all would fade to a dim and cool remoteness. Why had he not taken Allene with him? Impossible! Allene meant Maisie, — the family. This was escape, adventure, the Dream. To the dream those parts of himself, wife and child, were strangers. So was the island.

"That is Eden," he would tell himself, after being stimulated by contact and talk. Yes, it was Eden, that island abode of his, but how monotonous Eden could be! Here he was going toward clash and fire, toward music and sound, toward discord and change!

A spirit of ebullient youth would fitfully light upon him, of daydreams and the vivid prismatic lights of aspiration. Oh, it was glorious, glorious to set forth into

life again! He could have shouted for the joyous excitement of it.

It was no personal attachment or affection that sustained the wings which carried him homeward, but rather a general indefinite anticipation of renewal. He saw himself standing in the old garden of his boyhood, and its very air was charged with a new, an electric happiness that engulfed him. Life seemed to begin afresh, gushing forth in myriad fountains.

> Into my heart an air that kills
> From yon far country blows . . .

sang itself in his mind. The air no longer "killed" as it had done on the island, but it did choke the heart with a delicious congestion, and yon far country beckoned, beckoned ——

Only to touch the soil of it! He remembered reading of men kissing the earth upon their return or arrival in the land that was dear to them. Well, he —— no, he was no lunatic, no temperamental fool. But in his heart he knew that he could do the like when he landed on home ground, if only no one were looking on.

The customs officials in San Francisco and the dazzle of faces precluded that, but his body quivered and his legs were a trifle unsteady when he touched the landing pier. Fellow passengers were addressing him, saying good-by to him, but he only nodded abstractedly with a set smile upon his face, not daring to speak, so full was his heart of tumult and emotions at uncertain equilibrium. He paused not a moment more than was necessary at San Francisco; only bought some clothes and drove to the station.

It was not until the overland train was rushing him homeward across the desert and the plains, the train with

its magnificent security of the steel and power of civilization, *his* civilization, that he found himself staring out of the window of the car, seeing not the desert or the plains, but a group of seriated pictures of home. . . . The home not of Adams Rock, but his island — Allene, his departure; and a clear, unearthly reality framed every detail.

In a flash he suddenly knew why Allene had fainted when Akura had imparted the news of Bruce's arrival. That had been mysterious, troubling to him, a thing that had loomed enshrouded in a cloud of suspicion, and then receded under the turmoil of distraction. But now he knew. It had nothing to do with Bruce. No! It was because intuitively she saw that this coming had solved his, Roderic's, perplexity — *made it easier for him to depart.*

The uncanny knowledge of that gentle young woman! On a sudden she seemed more dear to him than ever before. Involuntarily his hand went up to his heart, as if to soothe the sudden pain that wrung it.

That leave-taking! —— No, that was one thing he would not suffer himself to recall. The look of Allene, her white dry-eyed rigidity when she stood facing him at the last moment in their room, taut, something like her father. Yes, she had seemed to overawe him with greatness, to dwarf him. Her words, so strange as they fell from her lips, when for the hundredth time he had assured her of his early, nay immediate return, of his actual repugnance to going.

"That — that is not the truth. Don't say it, my darling," she had said with a sort of terrible ferocity of calmness that froze him. "Don't let us do that now. We haven't done it before. When I see you I shall know that you have come back."

Enigmatic words, that seemed meaningless at times,

and yet how they haunted and tormented him! What was this desire to go that had overpowered even what he had felt after that cryptic utterance of Allene's? It was incomprehensible. He only knew that he was still in the grip of it, enchained by it. And Maisie, with her great inquiring eyes, clinging, clinging, Maisie!

"I had to go!" The thud of the wheels kept repeating endlessly over and over. "I had to go, I had to go!" The gigantic monster of steel and steam and iron that was carrying him, rushing at a headlong speed across the plains, was but an instrument obedient to that imperious desire in his heart. His thoughts kept fleetingly reverting to Allene, but he thrust them back. Deep in his heart was the hard conviction, the unflinching certainty, that he must go back to his youth — to his garden — alone!

Bruce, that devil Bruce! Did he understand? Did he know? He knew, at all events, that Roderic had taken the steamer at Papeete. Would he have the audacity to go back to the island in his absence and annoy Allene, torment her with insinuations of her husband's desertion, harass and plague her with his presence?

He felt on a sudden bitterly aggrieved that a man could not leave his home in quest of something vague that he could not name, without leaving a host of torturing pains and problems to solve themselves as best they might.

His goal was drawing hourly nearer. The chill nights of early November sent delicious shivers through his frame. To feel cold again! It was unpleasant. He was no longer accustomed to it. But it brought up odd surges of resistance, of atavistic energies bred under its long habit in his forbears.

The sight of the great cities began crashing upon him like gigantic waves or bombardments. Kansas City, Chicago! His senses reeled under the impact of them

as they might have done under the discharge of artillery, under the crepitation of a million drums. His eagerness to reach his destination became so poignant he could hardly eat during the last twenty-four hours of his journey. Constantly, excitedly, he kept gazing out of the window.

The island had receded to a faintness that troubled now with scarcely the dimmest of memories.

Back Bay!—— South Station!—— The magic of familiar names! A roar and a hubbub, a blur of people, women, men in khaki, women in uniforms, people, home! A rushing intoxication, unbelievably real, incredibly alien,—— overwhelming!

He stood for a time in the maze of the old life that appeared so distractingly new, gazing about like the bewildered yokel of comedy at the rush of figures, at the booths in the pandemoniac gloom, at the infinite busyness of the men and women of whom he was a part,—— of whom he never could be a part. His two heavy portmanteaus, his only luggage, were resting beside him on either side. Porters nagged him from time to time but he hardly heeded them. Then suddenly he realized that they were the one element in this surge of humanity that showed the faintest interest in his existence. He smiled sheepishly at a gnarled brown elderly negro porter, who seized his bags and demanded amicably whether he desired a taxi.

"Yes," he answered with deliberation, "a taxi."

"Where to, sir?"

"Where to?" he repeated. "To the North Station."

"Yes, sir."

Where but to the North Station could he go? Boston was roaring about him, but the North Station was all he could think of. That was the way Home!

Boston seemed somehow a terrifying spectacle. He

had expected for some reason, perhaps because he knew it so well, that it would appear smaller, familiar. But now as he drove through it, it seemed a rushing torrent almost as alien as all the rest of the cities he had seen. San Francisco had actually seemed more familiar. What was this quality in American cities that made them seem as of another planet? He could not tell. State Street, Washington Street, Bowdoin Square, — they were the same, yet —— But perhaps it was he who was different? But how could he be? It was high noon, yet a mist as of night seemed to envelop his vision, his very soul. A leaden sky; was it always like this? He remembered hot burning sunshine.

From the North Station he got a train almost immediately for Adams Rock, Marblehead and Salem, and something almost like tranquility settled upon him once he heard those names and took his seat. Yet he was throbbing with eagerness, too, eagerness for the strange old-fashioned silent town that was his home. From that vantage point life would appear more normal. If only he could have been carried there in his sleep! Well, he would be there soon enough.

He saw a vision suddenly of the tranquil old streets, old houses and new, tea rooms and gift shops, motor cars, the harbor, — the harbor that was unadulterated by commerce, dotted with small pleasure craft and white sails, and the peculiar smell of the sea so different from the smell of his own beach. The sudden olfactory memory brought a sharp pang of longing, a stab of nostalgia for his island home, peculiarly intermingled with his eagerness for Adams Rock, — just now, too, at the end of his long journey! It was damnable! Stonily he gazed out of the window and warned himself not to be a fool.

Adams Rock! Adams Rock! It was impossible — untrue. But there he was with his bags upon the con-

crete platform, alone, strangely forlorn. Only some half-dozen people descended with him from the train. They hurried off through the chill November air. He was alone.

"Where to?" creaked a shrivelled man of perhaps sixty from a dilapidated Ford that struck him as irremediably ugly in its old age.

"Where to?" Why was every one asking him that so pointedly? That was of the innermost mystery, yet that was what they all, drivers and porters, sought to lay bare at once.

"To the past — to romance — you fools!" Was what he wanted to answer. "To something more urgent than happiness, to the end of the gnawing desire, to — to ——"

"To the hotel, sir?"

"Yes, to the hotel," came as from a turmoil through which he had to labor to make himself heard. The old man, more spry than might have been imagined, leaped down, seized his bags and flung them in mechanically to a rattle of tin, and muttered in his grizzled dejected mustache.

"To the Revere House — , yes, sir."

As he sat back against the raised top, Roderic closed his eyes wearily. He wished to see nothing. He wished to see everything in his own way, not from this crank and rattling vehicle.

The pungent smell of the sea, however, made him open his eyes. The little harbor, where he had sailed a catboat for the first time under the guidance of old Billy Barker — that excellent nautical liar — so long ago! Still the sky was gray. Did it never change here? The Blackwell shipyard in the distance was the same — and those new sheds — buildings — what were they?

"Seaplane hangars," flung the driver over his shoulder.

But Roderic did not quite understand and felt no desire to inquire for elucidation. The hotel! The torment of travel was over at last! For so long he had waited — so long alone!

In the quiet precincts of the hotel the fire in the grate facing the desk sent a little glow through him. All the rest of the place, however, seemed to breathe a somber gloom, like a house trying to be cheerful the day after a funeral. This was a summer hotel that kept only a few rooms open for after-season traffic. The clerk, glancing at his name upon the register, displayed no particular interest. For a moment Roderic experienced that desire peculiar to home-comers after a long absence, — to bring back a touch of fame to the old place, some rumor, how slight soever, of deeds accomplished, of that lift from the mass that comes with a little cluster of renown about one's name. After all, had he not roved and lived widely and multifariously? Had he not suffered and toiled and made a place, carved out a tiny principality in distant waters, in strange far-off places? But the clerk, a stranger, merely touched upon the weather and mentioned the number of a room.

Here he had returned to the Golden Age, he reflected somberly after he had dismissed the boy and sunk into a chair; he had torn his heart in two to do it; had left his wife, his child, his home, thousands of unbridgeable miles behind, and this was what he had attained to: a drearily comfortable room in a hibernating hotel! A whelming loneliness engulfed him like black night. With sudden resolution he shook himself free from the assault of dark thoughts and began pacing the small room. He supposed he ought to eat something but he was not hungry. He took up the telephone receiver and asked for coffee. It was long in coming and he sat staring at a newspaper he had picked up and had not looked at.

Blackly, brazenly, the headlines seemed to stare back at him, as if defying him to fathom their meaning. Peace, war, armistice, troop movements, divorce, murder: it was all so forbiddingly obscure, so darkly meaningless! A mass of ink and paper, numberless words, but nothing to shed a single ray of light upon his peculiar situation that tormented and caused to writhe the spirit within him. Was the sheer enterprise of living the one and only item neglected?

After days of mental tension and physical inactivity his overwrought nerves drove him suddenly forward with a lash. Soon he cleared the region of the hotel. He was in the center of the town. He was in Washington Street, walking swiftly, mechanically towards Revere Street. How well he knew those pavements! How infinitely alien they seemed! He saw familiar old houses and some that were new. But his gaze fastened only upon faces. His heart cried out for a greeting, a glance of recognition. All the faces however were blank or preoccupied, — an uncompromising world of strangers. Yet this was Home! But how stupid to expect the population to come forth to greet him! He was going to his father's house.

A singular reluctance nevertheless bound his feet, kept him from directing them homeward. For a moment he stood gazing, irresolute, now at St. George's, his father's old church in Revere Street, now at the passing pedestrians, at the denuded trees under the black darkening sky, gazing with intense aimlessness, with a preoccupied torturing indecision that enraged him.

"This is maddening!" he muttered smiling ruefully at himself and abruptly he turned into Revere Street, walking west, past the Torrance mansion, past the Winthrop and the Chase houses and down Adams, turning a familiar corner, steering round a well-remembered iron

railing into Warren Steet and, with a thickly beating heart, toward his father's house, — and the garden!

A sudden horrible sensation of uncertainty penetrated his vitals. What kind of a reception would he meet with? Strange how that aspect of his adventure had wholly escaped him! Too late now, however, to dwell upon that. He must walk up firmly. Once at the door he must laugh away stiffness and any vestiges of a rankling injury in his people, in his father, in himself. By George! If they did not feel the wonder of the occasion, the strangeness and the romance of it, — why, he did! No one should spoil that for him. Had he not suffered poignantly for its sake? It would be an odd coincidence if he ran into Myrtle Thornley there.

The gate would click dully; he could almost hear it clicking now. He would walk briskly to the door. Lights were just being lit in other houses. There too would be the lamplight, as of old. The door would open.

"Hello!" he would call out lightly, laughingly. "Hello, father — mother — it's I — Roderic, dropped in to say good evening!" Consternation — confusion — jubilation! The swift reellike suddenness of the picture, the vividness and romantic intensity, lifted his heart sharply and he almost ran the last few yards.

The house! It was still dark. He was standing at the gateway with both hands upon the gate, unable to move forward. The house was dark,— dark and terribly forbidding. All the world seemed swathed in a pall of darkness. Something strange about that house!

The very hedge, so long in his memory as trimly clipped, squared and even, as though poured in a mold, — it was ragged now, a wretched affair, grown wild with neglect.

The lawn also — the bed of velvety lawn in front, two

squares divided by the gravel pathway — how unkempt it looked and how dismally rustling with the dead leaves heaped by previous winds!

Desolation! Why? With trembling hands he opened the gate at last, oblivious now of the sound of its peculiar creaking, and stood on the single doorstep, on the stoop. The bronze knocker was tarnished to blackness. One of the three panes in the fanlight was broken and one was cracked.

"Gone!" he said to himself. "Gone — somewhere — deserted!"

An immense wave of feeling, of irreparable loss, of devastating irremediable frustration, on a sudden smote him. He seemed to stagger as under the force of a blow. Oddly enough, he had no forebodings of calamity to the inhabitants. But the bitter injury of the dismal picture! Wildly he hammered at the knocker, as a drowning man clutches at something. The sounds reverberated with a sickening hollowness through all his fibers. Suddenly a dark creature flew out of the broken fanlight with a whirr over his head. A bat! he thought, and his heart was beating crazily against his ribs.

With abrupt violence he flung away from the door to the right, to the flagged pathway that led to the rear, to the garden.

Dark lilac bushes that fringed the path brushed their remaining dry leaves against him. He touched them all as he passed unsteadily by them, in a mysterious ritual that came back to him from boyhood. He had always done that. There was no reason. He felt like clutching their withered leaves to his aching desolated heart.

He stood at the entrance to the garden! A dimness of the eyes blinded him for an instant as he stood staring, unseeing. Then his gaze traveled slowly, through the chill anemic light remaining, to the spot that had so

strangely, unaccountably figured in his dreams. The concrete reality on a sudden was searing his eyeballs, his very heart.

What he saw was an oblong of rank, chaotic growth, a mass of tangled weeds: blackened desolation! — That was the Garden!

The beds of phlox and peony, the borders of ageritum and cosmos, the dahlias, gladioli, all were merged and unrecognizable in a jungle of plantain, chickory, and milkweed, yellow broom and burdock; all the hardy weeds of New England seemed to have taken forcible possession here, to have come savagely into their own.

A choking agony oppressed him. He wanted to cry out.

"It's I — Roderic Whitford! Don't you know me? You have lived in my dreams with a beauty and purity not of this earth. How could you — how could you turn like this into decay?"

But only a muffled groan sounded in his throat. The old mulberry stood drooping beyond the center as of old, its dead browning leaves rustling faintly, dismally. The high wooden wall at the back of it seemed to enclose a cemetery.

Near to his hand was a rosebush, one of the rosebushes that had been his imaged ideal when he had tried to cultivate his own roses on the island. He seized it spasmodically. Sharp thorns pierced his palm. He scarcely felt the pain, but his grip automatically relaxed. He lifted his hand to his eyes. Beads of blood stood out, forming larger and one or two of the thorns remained. As one in a dream watching something emptily, he drew out the thorns and watched the drops of red exuding in their wake. Then he took out his handkerchief and clutched it in his wounded palm.

"Hey, mister —— they's nobody living there!" He

wheeled about toward the street. A boy, whose head was barely showing over the bushy hedge, was giving him this bit of kindly information.

"Thanks!" he replied mechanically in a voice he had never heard before. "I —— I was just looking. Wanted to buy the place."

"Aw — I see!" and the boy with disgust in his voice sauntered on. Then it struck Roderic that the boy might know something. He was human at all events; there was speech in him. He ran heedlessly across the rank beds to the hedge. But the boy was too far now to shout after. He turned back into the garden.

"A horrible wilderness — the old place — my garden!" His lips were moving but no sound came from them.

He wanted suddenly to laugh, to roar and cry out in an agony of bitter laughter, to roll with it, swing his arms about in abandonment to irrepressible cacchination. But something in his throat seemed to choke all the vents of laughter. His eyes were hotly blinded. He put the crumpled handkerchief in his palm against them. It was wet with the exudation of helpless, gruesome inward laughter.

"I must go," he thought and he stood stock-still. The street was bleakly empty.

"I must go," he thought again, but still he stood rooted.

"I'll grow into one of these weeds," passed idly through his mind, "if I stand here long enough." He moved finally, walked back along the flagged pathway and found his hand brushing against burrs on his coat. He sat down on the stoop to pick them off. His hand fell motionless.

"This is the house of death," he said to himself, "and I came back to seek here — what? The past? What is

the past? What possessed me? What was it drove me? Ah ——" his thought swerved sharply — "I must find them — my father — stepmother."

But how to find them? That ought to be easy. Professor Thornley's house across the way. Yes, there were lights showing.

As he left the gate he found himself latching it carefully, securely. He turned toward the Thornley house and as he passed the hedge he paused once again to look over it. The desolation of the garden struck him anew with a dank penetrating chill. He shuddered.

"So this is my dream garden," he murmured, "my enchanted garden!"

CHAPTER XXII

HAPPY HIGHWAYS

An irrelevant melancholy smile came to his lips as he crossed the street. Was old Thornley still alive, still teaching Latin at the high school?

A boy was declining a Latin noun, — *causa*. Groping in uncertain knowledge the boy invariably paused upon the first syllable, while mentally praying for the advent of the right ending, and stopped. Roderic saw the scene, heard the very tone.

"If you want the Latin word for cow, I'll give it to you," Dr. Thornley rumbled mildly. "It's *vacca* — *vacca*. But this is *causa*."

A far-fetched unrelated memory; and how absurd! Yet it brought a strange pang of nostalgia. Then it came to him that it was not thoughts like this that were wont to fill his mind when he dashed across toward Myrtle's house of an evening in the past. He paused for an instant and then rang the bell.

"Probably people named Smith or Jones now live here," he reflected with dejection. His late experience had shattered the framework of his expectation, of the secret structure of illusions built up like a cathedral or a coral reef in the course of many years.

An elderly woman servant came to the door.

"Does Doctor Thornley live here?" he inquired.

"No, sir. This is Mr. Robinson's house." He might have smiled as he later did smile at the answer. But a clamping tension still gripped him.

"Could you tell me where — where I might find Mr. Thornley?" His throat was dry. He hung upon her answer with suspended pulses, his head bent forward. The woman stared at him gravely.

"Why, sir —— I think ——" she began, held by the spell of his intense expectant gaze, "—— I think I heard he was living with his daughter in Boston — Mrs. Cloud — Mrs. Henry Cloud — or in Brookline, I should say. I don't know the street, but the telephone book ——"

"I see," he broke in explosively. "Thank you. I'll — I'll — and do you happen to know," he queried abruptly, "where the other daughter is — Miss Myrtle?"

"Miss Myrtle? —— No, sir," was the blank reply. She must have been moved by something she saw in his face however, for with sudden clemency she added:

"Excuse me a minute. I'll inquire, sir." She closed the door behind him and left him standing alone in the hallway. He looked about; he remembered that hallway. The light was not so bright in Myrtle's day. The woman returned with a constrained smile upon her lips.

"That's Mrs. Godfrey, sir," her large thin mouth opened wide. "She lives here in Adams Rock now — Mrs. Robinson says — in Mrs. Cloud's cottage — one of the small cottages near the station. Anybody there'll tell you — the station master — you can't miss it," she urged.

He murmured his thanks and no doubt surprised her with a low bow like a foreigner. She did not know of the rôle she was playing — as the first finger post to — the Past.

"That ought to be enough for one day," he told himself sadly, as he left the doorway and wandered aimlessly away. The sense of devastation in his heart, of a desert emptiness, was only slightly watered by the faint trickle

of hope that now he would see Myrtle and she might tell him things.

The endless flux of life preoccupied him: his father's home — Thornley's — changed, dispersed, scattered! Only upon his own island was stability. But his dream, his vision that was so much more than all reality, — was there not a shred of it remaining? That was impossible. By sheer power of will he would piece it together out of a dissolving chaos.

He was surprised to find himself near the station, staring at the cottages upon small lots with their shrubbery and grass plots. "Mrs. Cloud's cottage?" Yes, the station agent knew. It was the fourth one over there, brown shingled walls. Yes. He stared at it. How had he come here? He recalled no intention of seeking the place this evening. There were no lights. But in any case he would not go there now. With sudden decision he made his way back to the hotel.

In the all but deserted dining room he had no notion of what he was eating. He ate bread voraciously without hunger and paused midway in his meal. All the food seemed to taste alike. He left the dining room as one in a hurry and returned to the emptiness of his bedroom. He smoked for a time. He paced the room. He sat down and rose up. The inward lash still drove and whipped and gave him no rest.

"That ought to be enough for the day," he had told himself, but obviously it was not enough. The force that had driven him thousands of miles from the other end of the world, from home and love and peace, was driving him still. He put on a coat and hat, called for a taxi and gave the direction of Mrs. Godfrey's cottage. There were lights now; she was at home.

But the woman who opened the door to him inquiringly he did not know. She was no servant obviously.

She was large, full-lipped, rouged and gave oddly the impression of a seed pod about to burst open. Her hair was certainly not Myrtle Thornley's hair, for it was copper-colored and cut short.

"Mrs. Godfrey in?" he murmured coldly.

"I am Mrs. Godfrey," was the coquettishly smiling reply. He dared not betray the wave of chagrin that swept him. His hand rested tremulously on the outside door knob.

"I am Roderic Whitford," and he heard himself laughing idiotically for no reason on earth. He felt his face grow hot.

"Roderic — Whitford!" repeated the woman in stark amazement. Then abruptly she seized both his hands and drew him into the entry. "Roderic Whitford!" she cried again with a little scream. "Oh, how could you take me so! —— Why didn't you let me know? Oh, dear, dear, how wonderful! Take off your coat — come in," she ran on burstingly. "This is the most marvelous thing that's happened in — I don't know how long!"

The warmth of the welcome — the change in the girl Myrtle! He opened his mouth to speak, but no sound could pass his throat.

"Come in — come in," she urged, bustling and pulling at his hand. "Here are friends of mine, Miss Price — Mr. Gillmore — Mr. Roderic Whitford — an old pal — an old sweetheart of mine, I may say" — and she giggled inanely — "from the year one — when we were both babies!"

Myrtle's imbecile giggling, her absurd flood of words meant to be humorous, aroused no answering humor in him. The feeling of ruin and devastation that smote him in the garden was with him still as he shook hands mechanically with the thin-cheeked young woman named Price, smiling into his eyes, and the purplish heavy man

named Gillmore, whose grin brought forward a bluish jaw.

"Come from the other end of the world," rattled Myrtle like a chorus. "And how long have you been here, Roderic?"

"Arrived to-day."

"And found me right away — under my alias and all? That was sweet of you — wasn't it, Gertie?" she appealed to the thin-cheeked one whose smile, fixed permanently, now took on a malicious cast.

"I should think so!" she snapped with a vigorous nod. "Have a cigarette for that!" and she held out her case. He took a cigarette.

"Wait a minute — wait — a — minute!" Gillmore held out a pudgy hand with heavy play of eyebrows. "We thought it might be strangers, Mr. Whitford — but seeing it's you ——" and he moved his chair aside, bent lumberingly down and brought forth a lacquer tray with glasses, ice and a bottle of whisky.

"Let's drink to it!" he boomed with grotesque ceremoniousness. "Another glass, Myrtle?"

"Do get it, Gertie," bubbled Myrtle. "I can't leave my guest now I've got him."

"I'll say you can't!" snapped Gertie.

"You can't imagine, Roderic, how often I've thought of you," purred Myrtle nauseatingly. "You were such a sweet boy!"

"And what's the matter with the man?" demanded Gertie boldly, before turning toward the pantry. Roderic experienced a shadowy desire to strangle both of them. But it didn't matter; nothing mattered, only the sense of irreparable ruin!

The extra glass was brought. They drank. They laughed around him and drank again. They chattered of the war, of the hoped-for impending armistice, of

money, of the wave of prosperity that must sweep in like a tide, and again of the money that would be made. He scarcely heard them. There was a tumult in his brain. "Home! This is Home," he thought. There was a feeling as of death in his heart.

He lost the thread of the talk. What a fool they thought him, their eyes were saying. He felt himself wrapped in clouds of darkness.

"Oh, no!" he suddenly awakened to hear in Myrtle's affected mouthing. "No — Gertie. I think vice is beautiful."

"You ought to know!" flashed Gertie with a shrill laugh, looking at both men.

"Don't you think vice is really beautiful, Roderic?" Myrtle turned to him argumentatively.

"Beautiful?" he repeated absently. "I don't think I caught what went before. But — beautiful? No — I should hardly say that — not the way I saw it — down there in the islands."

The purple Gillmore winked at him knowingly.

This must be enlightened conversation, Roderic told himself. Clouds of chill fog seemed to roll over him. These people too, seemed to be groping after something, something of freedom from the somber restraints that environed them; something they called life.

At last Gillmore and Miss Price announced their intention of leaving. Myrtle smiled to them significantly, as if explaining why she did not detain them. They went; they were actually gone. The air seemed less murky.

"Now," he began abruptly, without sitting down, "won't you tell me what has happened to my people — my father?"

"Oh, dear," murmured Myrtle, with a look of recoil in her eyes. "Don't you know yet?"

"No — I've only just seen the place — the house — the garden. It seems a ruin."

"Didn't you hear from Mr. Robinson?" he shook his head. Her information, thereupon imparted with the type of solicitude that pawed his lapels and hands, to the effect that his stepmother had died in April of that year and his father six weeks later in June, left him comparatively unmoved. He felt as though previous intuitive knowledge were merely being confirmed. He felt conscious only of a sense of shrinking from Myrtle's hand as it roved restlessly over his arm. Myrtle was being kind to him, yet he could not endure her touch. As if stirred by emotion he moved away from her.

She approached him again, however, drew him to a chair and poured out more whisky for him.

"I wasn't here then," she added to her narrative, "but father came up. He told me. I'm sure he told me that Mr. Robinson had cabled and written you."

"I never heard," he shook his head. "But why did they let the place — the garden — grow wild like that?"

"The garden ——" she repeated with a pucker of perplexity. "Do you mind — does it matter so much to you?"

He nodded slowly. She fell silent for an instant, her hand to her chin, lost in reverie. Then suddenly she bounded heavily toward him.

"Oh, I see — now!" she cried with flashing sprightliness. "I understand now. It's because we were sweethearts in that garden — the last time we saw each other there! Oh, Roderic, how dear of you!" And she seized his hands. "If you only knew how often I hated myself for sending you away! I know how much you cared. But I was so foolish and wilful — only a child, you know. And how I suffered!" She moved her chair close to his.

"My marriage to John Godfrey — I won't talk of that. Then Chicago — New York — I divorced him in the Village — he was an advertising man — he's been everything, even an actor — and the alimony has been *so* uncertain! — I'm trying interior decorating now ——" The thread of her speech was lost to him as she rambled on incoherently. The pulses throbbing in his brain were repeating, "Ruin — painted ruin — ruin everywhere."

This was of the past, the Golden Age, the dream that had drawn him; the longing uppermost in his heart was for flight, precipitate flight. Madly he wanted to run, to fly, to — emptiness. Emptiness seemed on a sudden infinitely seductive.

"I'll tell you what you do, Roderic," her somewhat hoarse voice broke in again. "You see Mr. Robinson tomorrow in Boston — his office is in State Street — and then come and have dinner quietly with me here. We'll have a sweet quiet time, only ourselves. And then we can tell each other everything. Oh, dear," she puckered her forehead suddenly. "I meant to ask you; you are married, of course?"

"Married," he repeated as in a dream. "Oh, yes — yes, of course."

"Is she — very lovely?"

"She — she is — oh" —— He could not speak of Allene to Myrtle. It was a physical and moral impossibility. His heart was sharply clamped as in iron.

"A — was she born there — or what?" He understood. She meant was Allene a native woman. He would not enlighten her.

"Oh, yes — yes," he uttered as from lips of marble. "She was born in Honolulu."

"I see," said Myrtle significantly. "Then you will come, won't you — about seven?"

"I'll do my best," he answered mechanically and rose.

On a sudden the woman threw a massive arm about his neck and kissed him loudly upon the cheek.

"Old friends like ourselves," she babbled with a raucous, cawing laugh. "It's not the first time!"

He was conscious only of a mad desire for escape. The open air felt like a restorative after a partial suffocation. He crossed the road unaware of what he trod on, and once away from the main thoroughfares he ran headlong, madly, in the direction of the harbor. Sensations of violent antipathy, of bereavement, of triumph mingled in a wild turmoil within him as he ran. He ran past a row of fishermen's cottages where he remembered going in the past to apprise Mrs. Mulcahy, his stepmother's laundress, that there was work waiting for her. Was she still alive? She was a large Irish woman with a delectable brogue, radiating vitality. Was she too now a ruin he wondered?

He passed through a desert of closed-up summer houses, a fugitive soul fleeing through an empty world. Only when the damp smell of the sea came pungent with the hissing air through his nostrils did he slacken his pace. He breathed deep of that ancient aroma of the sea that alone seemed to carry the promise of freedom, of hope, of life.

Where was he? He looked about him through the darkness in a roving bewilderment. This must be Nestor's point. He felt the cold breeze on his face from the harbor. At the water's edge he stumbled about for a time over rocks and weeds and sank down finally upon a boulder lapped by the friendly waves. A dash of spray came against his face and the taste of salt upon his lips. The water — the blessed ocean — that seemed to bring the rumor of other worlds, of another life, of infinite possibilities of happiness, fecundity and beauty, far removed from the desert of his past!

How long he remained there he could not have told. He found his fingers pressing against his beating heart. There was a burning sense of pain there, a smoldering flame; yet he fomented it like a delight. Before his eyes, too, there was a hot glow. In a radiance like a burst of tropic sunlight, he saw on a sudden his distant home that he had conquered in those far-off seas, under those infinitely remote yet infinitely friendly stars. The smell of the beach was acutely present to him, the sweet aroma of copra, the delicate scent of tiare and frangipani. Under a dazzling prodigality of sunshine he saw the island, his garden, a faery expanse of color and verdure, every sprig and blossom ineffably dear to him — a wealth of fecundity, freshness, growth — a paradise!

In midst of all the glow and brilliance, Allene stood out to him; Allene, the incarnation of love and life, infinitely tender, smiling pensively, with eyes of unquenchable love. So warm and incandescent was the picture that he put forth his arms; and he moaned in an agony of suffering when they encountered emptiness, the driving mist.

A wave of hot shame swept him like a withering blast. He had left everything — he had left Allene — for what? At the call of the most egregious and vicious of all deceptions: the call of a dead romanticism, the call of the past! From the midst of ashes and chaos he seemed to be pitifully yearning, like one self-condemned to exile from joy and happiness irrevocably lost to him.

"I know now what I came to seek," he muttered in an agony of desolate misery. "Now I understand." The glow that had faded into his own present wretchedness was the Burning Bush of his peculiar revelation. The agony of knowledge, of clear vision at last, filled him with a weight of overwhelming humility and bitterness. Where was the richness of the world he had pic-

tured through the years of nostalgia? Where was the fulness, the joy and the beauty of life?

All, all of it lay for him upon that distant island he had made his own by toil and love.

He leaped up suddenly. A tremor as of fever in his bones shook him. To return; to hold Allene to his heart again and Maisie; to walk in those paths ever more; to work and to laugh, — a fierce desire for all those beloved objects gripped him. He must leave at once all that to him appeared small and sordid; cut himself from it as with a knife.

With febrile steps he groped his way through the bleak darkened streets toward the hotel to await tomorrow. With certain clarity he knew now whence blew the air that killed and where lay the land of lost content.

Plain enough he saw it shining now. But should he ever come there again?

As he walked with long swift strides, he was not precisely thinking, but his mind was in a chaotic turmoil like the lashing of angry waves on a barren shore.

Why was he here at all? What was the essence of the lure? Something nauseating about that experience at Myrtle Thornley's cottage. How clean the summery tide of his own life with Allene and Maisie on his matchless island! How dark it was here and dead! And this was civilization. Every man must make his own civilization. At least in his soul. That was it. The souls here were dead. Corpses all, putrid with stocks, repressions, trivialities, money-making. Vice, she had said, was beautiful. What did she mean? What could they mean when they were all dead — dead? Not even a policeman to guard their graves. Cast away! They were the castaways, not he. He had made a little world, — a bright sunny dazzling little world. All the world ought to be brilliant,

happy. But these people had murky minds, murky souls — dead!

A dark angry mass of hostility, sullen, resentful, violent, was stirring, throbbing, rising in his chest, in his gorge against all the circumstances, yearnings, impulses that had brought him to his present pass. What had lured him? What was it that had snared and drawn him as with cables from all that was real and serene in his soul — to this? But that had been real too, — that pulling and drawing. Temptation — the temptation in the wilderness. To see whether his spirit was strong enough to return to light. The temptation — that nameless past — the strange complex of emotions clustered about and embodied in the old deserted house and ruined garden

He was surprised to discover that he was walking not in the direction of the hotel, but toward Warren Street, toward that same ineluctable ruin. Would he, could he never rid himself of its influence, of its pull upon him? He asked himself that question now with bitter hatred.

A hoarse, harsh call like some savage cry seemed to reverberate through him, through all his blood. His face grew tense, rapt. Deathly stillness all about him. But in that dead silence the sensation of a hoarse savage shout within made all his muscles tremble.

He was approaching the house.

If only he could crush it all together, roof and walls, like an eggshell. If only he could tear them up by the roots — house and trees and garden — where his life had been so repressed, where the light had been crushed out of his young soul, where he had narrowly missed becoming as one of these corpselike sleepers in the neighboring houses. If he were a giant or Titan and could destroy!

" If thine eye offend thee," he muttered to himself, and this was the first sound that had escaped his lips since he

had left Myrtle Thornley. The black mass of the house was before him. He paused in its gloomy darkness at the gate. The intense silence made the pulses thunder in his ears. If only — he felt rather than thought — if only he could blot out with a gesture that somber ruin that had made such havoc of his happy life by pulling it out of its steady course, pulling it to pieces.

Softly, mechanically, almost unconscious of what he was doing, yet with a strange primitive alertness, he lifted the latch and entered the gate. With sure, almost somnambulistic steps he walked along the path past the lilac bushes to the rear of the house into the garden. There he paused, gazing about him with instinctive watchfulness into the heavy darkness. Clouds obscured the stars. A chill breeze fanned his face. Dead, empty silence.

Suddenly, like an automaton, he stooped down and gropingly gathered an armful of dead leaves as a reaper gathers a sheaf to his breast. They fell rustling all about him, but enough remained in his embrace. With unfaltering sureness he carried them toward the house and let them fall, amid the stalks of dead hollyhocks, against the frame wall of the one-storied kitchen that jutted out into the garden.

"That's it — the one thing!" he exclaimed inwardly, as though he had just made a great discovery. With a semiconscious Eureka! air he put his hand to his forehead. It was cold and wet with perspiration.

Abruptly he turned and began to gather more leaves, dead stalks of flowers and bits of twigs, piling them all against the house. He was hurrying now with a concentrated hypnotized eagerness as on some business that could not wait. The breeze was blowing from the back against the house, toward the street. He thought, "That is good." A jet of nameless exultation leaped up in his heart, in his brain. Yes, that was good, — the only way.

Then swiftly he drew a match from his pocket, lighted it, cupped it in his hands and briskly applied it to the mound of leaves and stalks.

The leaves began to smolder gently, then to crackle under the steady insistent fanning of the breeze. He straightened from his stooping posture. So that's done, he thought, and a deep sigh rose from his breast. He felt like a surgical patient emerging from an anesthetic. With the sense of exultation still heady in his pulses he went gliding out of the gate and walked on without pressure or weight, toward the hotel. He had the sensation of something important accomplished, a structure finished, the last act of his luring romanticism completed.

On a sudden he was conscious of the breath of the sea. He paused to inhale deep draughts of it. A slight reeling effect as of vertigo supervened, and then his brain cleared and thought came again jetting into his brain, throbbing as something that had been checked and is suddenly released.

What had he done? It was the only thing. Allene would have wished him to do it. If thine eye offend thee — But it was done; no more thought. No ——

He checked it instantly. He turned toward the hotel, walked up the broad wooden steps and the old colored doorman let him in. The screech of a siren — the clangor of far-off gongs just as he was crossing the threshold — the dead stillness was rent as with pain. The negro mumbled something about "fire" and Roderic stepped back on to the veranda, listening intently. The negro, following him, went on chattering, chuckling, but Roderic barely heard him. Suddenly he descended the steps and strode briskly off toward the town.

The screech of the engines, the clangor of bells, drew nearer. Automatically his steps quickened. Other men were now hurrying, singly or by twos and threes, toward

Washington and Warren Streets. It was a certainty now. Yes, it was his house that was burning. If that policeman visible now only knew. If only nothing else was touched — just his own — his incubus. He turned the corner and saw plainly now the column of red smoke standing obliquely upward, shot through with volleys of glowing sparks. Something seemed to drop abruptly in his breast with a strangely lightening effect. He began to run, steering round into Warren Street. Both pavements were thinly crowded with people almost to the very engine, which was pumping violently.

His house — it was a mass of flames — flames dancing from clapboards and shingles, flames pouring out of the now mysterious sockets of the windows, waning and brightening as the two streams of water, with the magical brilliance of illuminated fountains, kept playing on the house. How fantastically beautiful it was! The most beautiful thing he had yet seen in this somber joyless civilization to which he had returned. He thought, "My house — my father's house. I was born here. There was no happiness in it. Had my father ever been happy here — even at first? No, I never saw him happy. I was never happy here. But I can be happy now."

An exultant relief, an ethereal lightness filled his bosom. An inner warmth, almost as hot as these flames, permeated him. This mass of wood and trappings was turning into a heap of rubbish, ashes, — nothing. That was all it was fit for. Yet how it had pulled and drawn him, stretched the cords of his heart to the breaking point. But he was free of it at last! Free!

He was standing a little away from the crowd, somewhat aloof, against a stone fence. How these people loved to fence themselves in, to exclude others like themselves. Windows were open in upper stories. Disheveled masculine heads, with sleep-swollen faces and

capped feminine heads were thrusting out. "Under control," he heard vaguely. He had felt no compunction on this subject, but the words brought him an added relief. Under control. No harm to any one else. That was good. Only the burning of dead wood. He felt himself on a sudden detached and freed from the dead hand of the past; this clinging to dead material things seemed like a gigantic curse under which all this world of so-called civilization labored.

"It is only the intellectual and spiritual best of the past," a voice within him seemed to say, "that is worth preserving. Instead of that mankind seems to cling to a lot of foolish things, — ghosts, rubbish, lumber. How the world could march if only it could free itself from those impediments!"

Overhead the clouds had broken and far beyond them a solitary star was shining.

His dark night was ended. He was experiencing light and freedom. The roof and portions of the walls fell with a dull crash and a pyrotechnic display of flames and sparks. The streams of water went on idly playing on the lurid mass. "Under control!" The phrase reached him as from an immense distance.

This was a strange time, surely, for him to experience a sudden expanding love for all created and uncreated things. But that was what he felt: a sharp change, as if mountains had rolled from him; an abrupt flooding of all his inner being; an outgoing love to all nature, to all humanity, to all those dwellers in these dark, regular streets, to all living things everywhere who wander and err and suffer in the great darkness of an encompassing night. He was at one with all life.

He stirred and began to move away.

"Allene!" He murmured to himself. Something

else was pulling him now with a strength trebly greater than all this had ever pulled.

At the North Station some hours later he was astonished to find himself staggering under the weight of both his portmanteaus, all his luggage. A frenzy of delirious chaos seemed to surge about him and some one shouted in his ear that the armstice had been signed.

"The armistice! The armistice! Oh, yes!"

He stood dumb and staring for an instant. And then a vast heave of joy on a sudden filled him, permeated him and flooded every atom of his body and choked his soul with an overwhelming surge of exaltation. The world was aglow, mad like himself with release, freedom. The shouts, the blare of horns, the laughter in which he was caught up, seemed the inadequate expression of his inward joy. He uttered a sudden loud shout, but nobody heeded him.

Louder, louder and more violent must be the delirium. He wanted to keep shouting to them all, to cry out, to urge them on, — men, women, boys. What was wrong with them? Did they not know how to rejoice? Nothing could stop him now. He waved his arms in the crowd and threw up his hat into the air. They were all celebrating his victory, his peculiar barrier that had burned away. Very well. He would celebrate theirs. Hurrah!

His portmanteaus, — he could not walk with them. He found himself swept toward a taxicab discharging a fare. Others were clamoring for it.

"A fortune if you take me to the Parker House!" he cried.

"A fortune! A fortune!" others madly, laughingly cried, some with tears streaming from their eyes.

"Get in, sir," laughed the driver. "You said it first."

A happy land this, but what a tremendous share of it

was his inner secret happiness. He drove away with the air of a victor, as though he had won the war.

There were no rooms at the Parker House. He could scarcely get to the desk and scarcely away from it. He left his bags in the cloak-room and shouldered his way once again into the throng outside.

He crept, he walked, he was jostled and elbowed in a mad tumult of noisy gladness until a wave of jubilation finally swept him to the door of Robinson's office in State Street.

With the exception of Mr. Robinson himself not a soul was there. All were celebrating the armistice in the throngs below. Mr. Robinson talked with solemnity to him for a moment.

"But didn't you even get my cable?" he queried.

"No. Thank God, I live where no cables run."

The lawyer looked surprised at such callousness, but put it down, no doubt, to the general fury of jubilation in the air.

"Of course I could have sold the place over and over," declared Robinson. "But your father died intestate and you are the only heir. Had to wait until we found you."

"Sell it, sell it!" cried Roderic, with a sudden explosion of energy. "Give it away!"

The lawyer looked at him quizzically. He had seen much of human nature but this example of it was puzzling to him.

"Unfortunately it burned down last night — burned to the ground. Mysterious — possibly sparks on the dead leaves. You are well to do, I take it," he queried politely; "a man of fortune?"

"I have all that I need — all that anybody needs — or I did have before I left home."

"Well, well," said the lawyer blandly, "I should be

a poor administrator if I hadn't kept it insured. But tell me," he continued, "how is it that you came at all, seeing you did not hear from me?"

Roderic felt a hot flush creep over his face and hesitated. Yet, feeling oddly as though he were in the confessional, he felt he must say something.

"The — the call," he began.

"Ah — I see exactly," the lawyer caught him up. "But happily that is now of the past."

An immense relief surged through Roderic. Yet he felt he could not leave it at that.

"The call of the past," he blurted out, "and ——"

"I understand you, Mr. Whitford," broke in the lawyer, "but the important thing now is the future." And he branched off into the usual prophecy of prosperity of which he spoke with the solemnity of an invocation.

"Let me make a suggestion," he finally digressed to the business in hand. "Your father's church, of which I am a vestryman," and his thin lips set in a hard complacency, "needs money. How would you like to give the place or the proceeds of it to the church?"

"Splendid idea!" cried Roderic with enthusiasm. "Never thought of that."

"That is excellent — excellent — does you credit — Mr. — ah — Whitford. I have some forms here ——" And he drew out papers from a drawer and proceeded to fill them rapidly. Roderic gazed out of the window for a space. "Will you sign here?" finally spoke the lawyer.

"Certainly — anything you say, Mr. Robinson."

"Peace is a wonderful stimulant," suavely smiled the lawyer. "I'm sure business will feel it ——"

"Nothing like it," laughed Roderic. "I have never known the meaning of peace until now."

"Ah — we never know our blessings," observed the

vestryman sanctimoniously. And he nodded with emphasis.

After he had signed, the lawyer gave him a bundle of his father's private papers and also invited him to dinner.

Roderic declined the invitation on the plea of an engagement.

"Where are you staying, Mr. Whitford?"

"In the coat room of the Parker House, so far." They both laughed.

"Come and stay with me at Adams Rock."

Roderic thanked him and told him he meant to leave by midnight.

"I fancy you must be a man of great affairs," remarked Robinson.

"The greatest in the world," Roderic answered abstractedly, and it was very certain the lawyer thought him slightly mad.

"I'll have these documents witnessed when the celebrants come back," he observed irrelevantly.

They shook hands.

"Now," said Roderic, with a vast inundation of yearning happiness within him, "I must look up a train for home."

"You speak as though you were going to Adams Rock or Salem," observed the lawyer.

"If I could only get there as quickly!" was the answer, and Robinson on a sudden gazed at him spellbound. He must have seen something in the face and in the eyes of his visitor to rivet his attention so sharply.

"I take it you're not married long?" he commented suavely.

"No," laughed Roderic, with a sound like a sob in his throat, "only since — yesterday."

And he left before the lawyer could challenge his sanity.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LOOMING DISTANCE

Five weeks later — weeks of intolerable nostalgia and yearning — and Roderic was again waiting for landfall with the aching heart of an exile about to be restored to his home. Once again the delicious perfume came floating to the nostrils, mingled with the very breath of life and brought, this time, a moisture to his eyes. The distant breakers on the barrier came softly thundering to his ears like salvos of triumph. And once again the island lifting from the sparkling sea, a mass of verdure from the depths of blue, towering to a peak beneath the clouds, brought him that illusion of a gigantic flower hanging chalice downward from a laughing sky. The glistening verdure, the fecundity, the color and profusion of tropic soil! An exquisite pain seemed to run through all his flesh like a tight-strung current of fire.

A blue lagoon, a dazzling sun, the coral mole with half a hundred small ships clustering about it and the friendly patient earth was once again welcoming the wanderer.

The first shock to his joy as he stepped upon the quay was a sudden realization of the immense hostile distance that still separated him from home, from Allene. And that feeling fell round him suddenly like a black cave, shutting out nearly all the joy of his return. Almost the first person he encountered on the quay was Langley, the man with whom he had traded schooners.

Had he taken an unfair advantage of Langley in that

trade? The sureness with which a questionable act turns up ghostlike at the wrong time shot swiftly into his mind as an addition to the store of his experience. But his pulses were athrob with unbearable excitement.

Among the crowd of staring, chattering, moving jostling men, women, children, dogs — white men, brown men, women of all shades and colors — the red face of Langley, heavy and pendulous with a pipe in his yellow teeth, the thick lower lip falling slackly away, stood out with a revolting attraction.

A smoldering light leaped into Langley's dull eyes as Roderic approached him.

"Hello, Langley!" Roderic greeted him. He had to greet some one, though his gorge rose at the dearth of friendly faces. Langley nodded without speaking and gave a jerk to the obscene briar pipe between his unspeakable teeth.

"Your boat here?" Roderic demanded excitedly, automatically.

Again Langley gave a brief nod. He had the bloated careworn appearance of one recovering from a debauch.

"Yours here?" he asked briefly.

"No, she is not — so far as I can see. I looked all along the mole as we came in." Roderic was merely talking. He had had no real expectation of finding his schooner at Papeete.

"Thought maybe you wanted to trade back," Langley grinned dully.

"Why? Don't you like yours?"

"Oh, ay ——" muttered Langley heavily.

"Well, then — I like mine," laughed Roderic nervously. "Why should I want to trade back?" To come home and meet Langley! It was somewhat nauseating.

An evil glint came into the trader's eye as though he were about to say something offensive, insulting, some-

thing that would call forth anger. But the fiber of the man was too cowardly, for Roderic's own glance instantly rose to challenge his.

"That was a Yankee horse trade — that trade," finally brought forth Langley with his slack, pendulous grin.

"Oh, come, Langley — you're drunk," retorted Roderic and with heavy-hearted aversion turned to go.

"No — wait a minute," Langley protested, stepping after him ponderously. "I ain't drunk now, but I was when I made that trade."

"You go to the devil," said Roderic savagely. "I have no time to waste." Then with a sudden ferocity of decision he paused. Like a faint bell, all at once, the sound, the voice of a plan announced itself through the darkness of the sorrow that was marring his home-coming. "Or else come and have a drink," he added abruptly, decisively.

"I'm with you there," responded the trader with ponderous alacrity. "This danged heat does dry the scuppers."

"The scum of the earth," Roderic thought to himself. "Langley, the man no one trusted, a man with the soul of a pickpocket, and I am going to drink with him."

A corrosive bitterness arose in his heart. Why was not Allene here waiting for him? Why was he here without Allene? Why? . . . Why everything? It was like that. But Langley — Langley, now that he was darkening the joy of his return, should be made to serve his purpose.

It was late in December. The rainy season had set in and the humid air was enervating. But Roderic was impervious to that. The first flood of joy at his return was now turned to a savage eagerness that buoyed and carried him hotly forward. The plan involving Langley was forming sharply, clearly, in his harassed mind.

"Let's hurry and get to the Tiare," he said brusquely,

"before the crowd gets there," and he threw his bags into the nearest Ford car.

"Hurry — *vite, vite!*" he called to the driver, as the creaking rattling vehicles started.

Hurry! Hurry! That had been his watchword throughout his westward passage ever since he had left Boston. Hurry! All the past violence of his volition to leave home had seemed like the stumbling, faltering steps of a child, in face of the intense possession that now lashed him steadfastly westward. Constantly his eyes had kept following the circling sun and its daily westering brought him a climax of acute heavy nostalgia, a devastating homesickness such as he had never known before. A perpetually ceaseless driving wheel within his body kept urging his soul forward far in advance of crawling trains, of a lagging ship.

Fatigue, discomfort were nothing. A fullness in his heart, in his throat, that gave him difficulty in swallowing his food, was the one physical sensation he was conscious of. He ate mechanically, he moved mechanically and when he slept at all, he slept mechanically with little resulting rest or recuperation. His previous flight in the opposite direction had been as the crawling of a babe compared to this flight of the soul. Suspense and an aching insatiable eagerness permeated him. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! If only those elaborate conveyances — engines, trains, and ships — knew the meaning of hurry!

At San Francisco he had begged a druggist to give him some sleeping draught or powder that might bring him rest.

"Must have sleep," he explained. "A weary voyage ahead of me."

"Where are you going?" had queried the druggist.

"To Papeete."

"But that's less than two weeks," the man had retorted.

"Two years," was the laconic answer; but the druggist had not understood. He gave him some tablets.

And throughout those interminable days of sunshine and calm, of brilliant nights and cloudy, of doldrums and squally rain, he had driven on, inwardly far in advance of the steamer, the old cord that vibrated between him and Allene now drawing him taut as a cable. The first sight of the Southern Cross below the line dazzled his senses like a promise of Paradise, and the faint aroma of the island perfumes sent a riot of joys and hopes galloping through his blood. He could hardly bear to look at the emerald verdure when the island came swimming into view upon the caressing blue of the tranquil sea! And now he was at Papeete, — and he seemed still a million miles from home. His heart was cracking for a sight of home and the first face he met was Langley's!

But Langley must pay for the chance that threw him in the way. Langley was an accident, an instrument. All things and people were now instruments to be used forcibly, pleasantly, ruthlessly, as the case might be, to bring to a point and complete his greatest, most indispensable, most exigent undertaking: to bring him home! Repulsive as Langley appeared, Roderic smiled at him as they sat down at a table in the Tiare.

A roaring, laughing crowd was already filling the hotel, and the spirit of rollicking irresponsible joy seemed like the dance of the May flies that live but for a day in a mazy round of reckless care-free abandon.

"Cocktails! Cocktails! Martini's," called Roderic and Langley's dull eyes brightened. The brown girls, with flowers in their hair and the shapeless flowing garments that for all their formlessness seemed beautiful, were gliding about with their eternal smiles hither and

thither among the tables, amid laughter and jests, flirting and clinking glasses, — the normal condition of existence, the normal atmosphere of the place. At the Tiare the spirit of the Armistice was perpetual. Except for Roderic and his secret longing, the hidden ineluctable pull of the cord from home, all were the joyous May flies, creatures of the day.

Langley's eyes grew brighter and his tongue looser after he had drained his copious glass.

"Well, old man," he spoke with expansive thickness, as though his tongue were too large for his mouth, "you did me on that trade, but what I say is, a bargain's a bargain. Can man say fairer 'n that?"

"Look here," Roderic answered, looking straight into the narrow pig eyes, "where are you going from here — to the Paumotus?"

"Fagatau."

"When?"

"Day or two. Waiting for stuff on this steamer."

"Then I'll give you a chance to make some money."

"How's that?" And the pig eyes smoldered.

"Take me home. It's not so much out of your way. I'll pay you a fair passage rate."

"What d' ye mean — fair passage rate?"

"Well, what is your price?"

"A thousand American dollars."

Whereat Roderic laughed boisterously.

"You are crazy, Langley. Better have another drink."

"Thanks. But that's my price," said Langley, his heavy countenance darkening to a deeper purple.

"This stuff goes to your head too quickly," again laughed Roderic.

"Tha's my price," repeated Langley with heavy stubbornness and a glint of cunning in his eyes.

"Never mind," said Roderic. "Here's how! —

Don't let's talk about it any more. You seem to want me to buy your schooner." Langley drank and wiped his gross lips with the back of his hand.

"That all you think the boat worth?" he grinned flabbily. "Told you — Yankee horse trade."

Roderic made no answer. He called the waitress and paid the bill.

"I've got to go," he murmured, briskly rising. "Got to find somebody who's in his senses."

"You'll come back," laughed Langley hoarsely. "An' remember, tha's my price — tha's my price."

Roderic reeled slightly as he threaded his way among the tables, but his unsteadiness was not the result of alcohol. That he scarcely felt at all. It was the idealist in him that was reeling, because the flaming dart of his return, an immense, a swift and beautiful streak of fire as it seemed now, should suddenly encounter the ugly dark obstacle of Langley. Could nothing remain rounded, complete and perfect in this world? But he was still sanguine with hope.

Once out of the hotel, his face closed again like a mask lest his anxiety should too plainly show, lest his driving consuming hurry should become visible to all the world. From obscure motives or no motives at all he hurried to the cable office. There the message announcing his father's death, some six months old, was given to him. But nothing else. He pocketed the form and smiled enigmatically to himself as he turned away, — a smile compact of irony, pathos, bitterness.

"It was so in life," he reflected sadly. "Things fell out thus. That was how near one's life kept abreast of events." Suppose he had inquired at the cable office before he left; what difference would that have made? Who could tell? But speculation was idle. There was no going back. Oh, no. He had tried it and he knew.

No going back, — only forward, onward, from the present into the future. Nevermore into the past. Some lines from his old and distant readings in Browning came gently floating back into his mind:

> But how carve way i' the life that lies before
> If bent on groaning ever for the past?

The truth of this mere poetical ejaculation, an *obiter dictum* which had fallen from Browning's pen seemingly without thought, overwhelmed him on a sudden as the essence of all wisdom, of all philosophy, faith, — of all life. That was the knowledge that he, every one, the world he had left behind him, needed to know. Already in that world he had heard talk of going back to earlier conditions, to pre-war conditions, to pre-this and pre-that. As if such going back were possible, even if it were desirable! Henceforth his device and motto should be those two somewhat harsh lines of verse. All life was insisting, demanding, crying out for new and ever new conditions!

In a brown study he found himself standing in front of the cable office. Shamefacedly he started away and hurried on. To McClintock's, the copra merchant! Perhaps McClintock had some word, some message for him from Allene? It was impossible, but now he was taking no chances. Also McClintock might know of boats or traders going to the Paumotus, — traders that were not like that shark Langley.

McClintock had no message of any sort for him. He could only tell him that the price of copra was falling, and the only trader known to be going in the direction of the Paumotus was Langley. Roderic cursed the luck and Langley under his breath and went out.

All that day with unappeasing haste he scurried about

the twisted streets of the little tropic town, along the quays and docks, on the water front, in cafés, bent on his consuming search for some one who might carry him homeward. Flowers, gayety, happiness, laughter seemed everywhere save in his own heart. Somberly again and again his harassed mind would return to Langley. How mad, how wickedly mad, he had been to put himself in this position, to leave all that was dear to him, with no better provision for returning! A downpour of rain in the afternoon, the uncompromising angry rain of the tropics that comes down in a flood from a sky of Biblical wrath, overtook him on a pavement slippery with overripe crushed mango fruits, drenched him in an instant to the bone, and drove him for shelter into a Chinese coffee house.

The low room was steaming with strange odors and foul with stale tobacco smoke, crowded with natives, half-castes, sailors, — a babble of coarse laughter and speech in diverse tongues. Roderic stood at the door with his back to the room, gazing outward at the pouring rain, at the choleric sky, when on a sudden he beheld, miragelike, a bewitching picture of his home island, the white house with its veranda dazzling in the prodigal sunlight, the beach, a fairy land of gold and blue, and in the garden, a jewel of strange beauty, of enchanting colors, stood Allene alone, beautiful and sad, gazing reproachfully toward him. And the perfume of the garden was all at once so redolent to his nostrils that he gasped abruptly and all but choked with a deep inhalation of the fetid air of the coffee house.

"By heaven!" he muttered hoarsely to himself, with a throb of anguish in his veins, "What devil is playing these cruel tricks on me?"

Suddenly, as he was standing thus in amaze, he felt a heavy touch upon his shoulder. He turned to see the

bloated face of Langley and the pig eyes somewhat swollen, leering into his own.

"Well, you found a boat, my fine feller?" he heard the thick lips utter through the din. He could scarcely reply, so much did the scene and the incident partake of the nature of an evil dream.

"No," he was forced to answer finally, and he turned with gloomy disgust from the foul alcoholic breath.

"Well, y' know my prishe," muttered Langley thickly.

"Your price is crazy, unheard-of," Roderic answered wearily, without looking at him. "It's too high even for a charter of your boat."

"Aha! — see? Told you Yankee horse trade," chuckled the trader. "Charter is good — damn good, by God! But tha'sh my prishe," he repeated with drunken iteration.

"When are you sailing?" Roderic queried tonelessly.

"Day aft' to-morrow."

"If I find nobody going sooner," he murmured finally, with an assumption of cold indifference. "I suppose I'll have to go with you."

"Ye mean if you don't find feller ye like better," grinned Langley, with a demoniac drunken glare. "Well, yer gooshe cooked then, m'boy. Might'sh well put your dunnage aboard."

"By the Lord!" thought Roderic with bitter self-searching, "I suppose this had to be. I have not yet suffered enough, or paid enough. I must face my music."

On the Thursday following the day of his arrival at Papeete, the little schooner Roderic knew so well nosed her way out from among the varied craft along the coral mole and pointed to the gateway in the reef and the open sea. In his heart was a somber lightness, a smoldering joy that gave a kind of melancholy exaltation to his spirit. He was going home at last, but going with

Langley. Narrowly, with a constantly simmering suspicion, he watched and scrutinized every movement and mien of the disreputable knavish trader into whose hands he had delivered himself. No one trusted Langley, yet he was trusting him, because come what might he must get to his home, to his heart's overwhelming desire. Yet in that troubled heart of his he knew that he might be going as surely to his death.

He had fondled a feeble hope in his breast that Langley, after his debauch ashore, might be too drunken during the first days aboard to navigate his boat and that he, Roderic, might slip into the charge of the schooner as a sort of self-appointed mate. Langley, however, had proved just sober enough to demand money down in advance and to curse his crew adequately without assistance from his passenger.

"Don't call me your passenger," Roderic corrected him once; "call me your prisoner." Whereat Langley laughed raucously with a cunning glint of his beady eyes.

"Not bad," he roared, slapping his leg, "not half bad. My prisoner! Maroon you on some nice reef! I knew you had to come to me!" And again he gloated in his triumph.

"Now give me the position of your rotten atoll, and I'll do my best to get you there — do my best," he repeated, with a savage click of his yellow teeth. Roderic gave him the position of his island.

"And will you let me follow your course on the chart?" he asked.

"No, sir, not by a damn sight!" snapped Langley viciously. "I'm skipper here, I'll have you know. Nobody can come poking his nose into my affairs."

Roderic made no further attempt at securing or at ingratiating himself with Langley. Definitely now he realized that he had delivered himself over into the hands of

his enemy. The madness of this act came acutely home to him as the schooner continued on her course, but it seemed no greater madness than much that had preceded it. A mood of racking despair as he envisaged his position was succeeded by a somber melancholy stoicism. If his destiny permitted he would reach his home and see Allene once again, in spite of Langley. If not, — well, he had brought his fate upon himself and whining would do no good. But had he brought his fate upon himself? A sudden revulsion shook him.

Why should a man be so much a puppet, a blinded thing compact of longings, desires, nameless and imperious wants that carry him like flotsam on the face of the waters, like dust on the breast of a gale? The happy highways of life — there must be happy highways — but why were they so brief and fragmentary? Who trod them and who was secure in them? The poignant and pathetic uncertainty of existence suddenly overwhelmed him afresh like a new discovery.

Home — the home he was aching for— was doubtless one of those highways. How remote, how excruciatingly unattainable it appeared to him now! Glamor surrounded it like a legend, and like a legend it seemed nine-tenths imaginary.

Vividly, sharply, came back to him the pressure of monotony he had felt in that unattainable home, in the life he had made with Allene. There he had dreamed of freedoms and contacts and delights in the luring world outside. He recalled the sensation of being a prisoner of life — imprisoned and captive in the home he had fashioned — in his garden, with Allene!

How achingly he longed for those prison bars now! He saw by a sudden light of intuition that the greatest as the least were prisoners of life. That the secret of freedom and happiness lay in the curbing of greeds and

desires. Was he the last to learn this truth or were all men and nations equally blind to it? Was it too late for him now to profit by his discovery? The dark and the light of his peculiar adventure, his tiny arc of the great circle, the bitter and the sweet of its savor were all suddenly revealed and vivid to him in a strangely transformed juxtaposition, as though his last day upon earth had come. Unsleeping and vigilant though he might be, he realized he was in the hands of fate; and fate in this instance was Langley.

He endeavored to shake himself free from these tormenting deflections by chatting with the Kanaka crew, by lending a hand with their work. But the noxious presence of Langley made peace even in resignation impossible.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GATEWAY AGAIN

On the morning of the seventh day out from Papeete Langley came forward to him with a brow lowering as the heavy cloud bank to the northeast, his jowl hanging over the lapels of his soiled drill coat. Roderic's heart bounded sharply.

"Getting near my place, aren't we?" He inquired casually enough, but with a fiery excitement in his breast.

"Look here," growled Langley, ignoring his words with a peremptory jerk of the head. "Come on aft with me. Want to talk to you."

Whatever it was, whatever treachery or baseness the trader was devising in that bullet-shaped skull of his, would now come to light. Instinctively Roderic knew that with the deadly certainty of intuition. But he walked forward lightly beside Langley, humming a tune as he went. Langley shot him a sidelong glance but said nothing until they entered the little cabin.

"Now by my reckoning," began Langley, with ponderous gravity, "we'll come abreast of your island by noon."

"Good!" cried Roderic with feverish exultation. "A snug berth you'll find it. I'll have my men water and victual you — if you need it."

"Keep your shirt on," interposed the trader with a dark gleam in his eye. "Point is, I ain't going into a hole I don't know. I've got a bad barometer here and

I don't go piling up my boat on any damn reef I don't know the lay of."

"But I'll take you in," expostulated Roderic with a dry throat. "I know every inch of it."

"No, sir!" cried Langley, with a rising temper. "I don't trust anybody. Safer before the wind for me." Roderic's heart was leaden within him. What was the beast driving at?

"Well, what do you intend to do?" he queried calmly. "I paid my passage — the price you extorted, didn't I?"

"You're danged right you paid your passage," shouted Langley in triumph. "But I ain't going to look for no break in any bleeding reef for anybody in places I don't know."

"What will you do, then?" demanded Roderic in his turn. "Out with it!"

"This is what I'll do," rasped the trader with a glare of his bloodshot eyes. "See that dinghy swinging there? You'll pay a hundred and fifty dollars for her and she's yours."

"And what should I do with the dinghy?" demanded Roderic, suppressing an all but irresistible desire to grip the brute's throat and choke the evil life out of him.

"You'll go over the side in her," intoned the other in a sort of mocking singsong. "You'll step your little mast and lugsail and you'll find your rotten hole for yourself. I've fooled away too much time already on this bloody business."

"Man alive!" cried Roderic, with a dry laugh. "If you want to — do that kind of thing, why go to all that trouble? There must be easier ways. If a storm catches me in that eggshell," he thought, "it will be plain murder." But he would not give this devil the satisfaction of hearing him say it.

"That's as may be," roared the trader. "If you know

your place so well, you won't have any trouble. But I don't go putting my head in a noose."

"No?" said Roderic. "The noose is waiting for your head somewhere."

"Say another word," exploded the other in darkling wrath, "and you'll have to swim for it. No Yankee, nor no other blackguard can do me twice in a horse trade or any other trade."

With the cold fury of despair in his heart Roderic stared at him for an instant then abruptly turned and left the cabin. Whatever happened he was determined to have no more words with that scoundrel.

A dull fatalism crept in upon him in the wake of his anger. The island was nowhere yet in sight, and Langley might still come to think better of it, depending upon the quantity of alcohol he imbibed between now and landfall. But in any case, he thought, if it were his destiny to perish at the very threshold of his home, the home he had so madly, so cavalierly abandoned, the home that now shone with the ineffable brightness of life itself, then perish he must. A faint clinging hope in his star came blowing like a wavering breeze through his heart. He felt like a man condemned to death, but hoping against events for a reprieve. He walked up and down in the waist of the ship without haste, without betraying by a sign or gesture the turmoil of perturbation within him, humming softly the tune of "Tipperary."

The cloud bank was rolling in steadily, solidly, voraciously eating up the brightness of the sky, blotting out the sun like a vast sheet of dull-gray blotting paper. The whitecaps grew more insistent and numerous, like barking heads leaping up from the darkness of their rolling bed.

Strain his eyes as he would, Roderic descried the faint

shadowy blur, but infinitesimally deeper than the overcast horizon, only after the Kanaka lookout had cried his landfall.

For a moment joy leaped up in his heart, to the uttermost filament of his veins like a fountain of wine. His senses swam with a sudden and heavy intoxication. He swayed for a moment then ran to the forepeak and stood in the chains beside the brown Kanaka. There behind that film of gray veil, that resembled any other distant spot of land seen in like conditions, lay mysteriously hidden happiness, beauty, his heart's innermost desire. He imagined it sunlit and radiant, in despite of the clouds, as though apart from the universe, eternally brilliant, a magical spot where only light prevailed. There was Allene who filled his heart, and there was Margaret; there the home that he had conquered, the richness, the peace and the splendor; and there was the garden, his garden that he had made with his hands, incomparably, shiningly beautiful, surpassing Avilon or any valley of romance, beckoning and calling to him. He seemed on a sudden possessed of wings, so light was the soul within him and so incredibly eager. Already it had winged its way far in advance of him, hovering in ecstasy over the island. A voice like music floated toward him. Was — was that Allene calling him?

On a sudden he heard a shout behind him. A Kanaka was carrying a small keg of water upon his shoulder to the dinghy and the two others were already busy at the falls.

A great throb like a steam piston suddenly shot his heart forward against his ribs and for a moment his throat and chest felt choked and distended.

"He is going through with it then?" he murmured to himself, aghast, as though watching preparations that concerned some one else. "Can he really do it?" his

lips did not move but he was inwardly conscious of an eloquence of soliloquy that seemed to resound to the heavens. "Send me to my death in sight of home — almost within reach of Allene's hand, of her voice, her eyes? Was this why I hurried home so fast — only to die just outside the door? No, no!" he murmured aloud. "Only let me see them once again — for one hour — one minute — one second ——"

"Whitford!" shouted Langley again. "Come, step along now. No fooling. Haven't got the time for it." The baseness and the treachery of the man then, knew no respite, no change.

A sudden fortitude swept into Roderic's blood like a baffling wind from an unknown quarter, crackled through his muscles and stiffened his backbone like a spring.

"One can die only once," he thought, "but that blackguard will hear nothing more from me. After all, it may be one of his jokes." Aloud as he came aft, Roderic said,

"I'm ready, if you are."

Langley looked at him intently for a moment. That, said a wild hope in Roderic's heart, is the point where this pirate will declare it's all a joke."

"Let's see that hundred-and-fifty dollars," finally uttered Langley. Calmly, in businesslike fashion, Roderic counted out the money.

"Now — get over with you." Then it was not a joke. The malignant half-drunken ruffian really meant it. A momentary film of darkness wavered smokily before Roderic's eyes and then it passed. A strange calmness fell upon him and a sudden clarity of vision, of clear-eyed peace, settled upon him, that seemed to cut off cleanly and closely all doubt and all fear. He felt completely master of himself. He looked intently for a moment into Langley's narrow eyes and smiled.

The Kanakas standing about grinned lividly and their eyes glittered into his with awe.

"Good luck," muttered one of them in Tahitian and Langley turned away with a heavy movement of his hulking shoulders. Then Roderic briskly stepped over the after bulwark and lowered himself by a rope into the dancing cockleshell below the stern.

"Let go!" shouted Langley, peering downward with a sort of overhanging cold malignancy. It was done.

Five minutes later, intent and amazingly alert, Roderic, with his tiny mast stepped and the sail drawing, was making for the mistily shadowy shore, which he could barely discern from his low position against the cloud-bank. The schooner was tacking about into the wind. He glanced for an instant over his shoulder and then checked himself with a bitter determination to look behind him no more.

The first shock to his attention, as he looked up mechanically from his task of steering the dancing little craft, was the illusion that the smoky patch of the island seemed more distant than before. It was an illusion that he understood, and yet it sent a shattering current through his vitals like the stab of cold steel.

If only he could see the land more clearly, so as to recognize it. Was Langley capable of setting him down near some other island not his own? Why not? If he were capable of this? But a sudden wave of reassurance swept him. Yes, this was his island. His mind strained to the breaking pitch, refused to envisage any danger or calamity more dire. It had reached its saturation point.

A plop of water fell with a sound like a slap or a buffet into his boat and for some minutes all his energies were intently concentrated upon bailing it out. The water was

sloshing about his feet and over the portmanteaus in the bottom.

"Might get wet," he muttered to himself, "the things for Allene and Maisie might get soaked."

Then on a sudden he laughed to himself. In the face of his position and danger, that thought and these words mechanically uttered to the wind appeared screamingly humorous. He laughed, — and found his lips stinging with pain where the dry skin had cracked.

For an instant there was a lull in the wind. Nevertheless his little sail drew steadily. There was enough wind for that. But with a sudden glow in the respite he pictured again his wife Allene; the dazzling spot that was home, so inimitably, so peacefully radiant, a veritable island of the blest; and his garden, as though that patch behind the house summed up and presented in a single parcel all his past endeavor, — the years he had lived and wrought upon earth. So strangely vivid appeared the picture, even to the shadows of an afternoon, that he leaped up sharply, to the danger of his crank, little vessel and himself, and gazed, with a new gripping pain through all his members, at the distant shore.

Yes — it was plainer now. A little nearer it seemed.

And that — that sound! Was it not a sound? Was it the wind and the waves? He could have sworn he had heard a voice — Allene's voice — full of pity and alarm, made strange by suffering and alarm, crying, crying and calling to him:

"Roderic! — Roderic!" he heard her with his ears.

A chill tremor of awe quivered through his flesh and crept like an acid through the recesses of his being. He eased the sail somewhat, for the wind was blowing up more angrily. Swiftly he glanced about him. Some fifty yards behind him to the right, he saw a dark triangle dipping and showing among the swirling waves. With a

savage epithet and yet with an involuntary shudder, he told the shark that he had no fear of it. But all at once his island, his home and his wife seemed infinitely more remote and unattainable than they had appeared when he had hurried to the South Station in Boston.

"To die within sight of home; is that possible?" his lips murmured as of themselves, without sound.

"Perfectly possible," he answered himself harshly, with an eery laugh that sent a chill through him. A wave swept him and left him drenched with the salt water, and feverishly he fell to bailing again with his left hand, his right, like another personality, intent upon managing his craft and sail.

Why, it suddenly flashed through his brain, with an irrelevant swiftness, should a man not be able to recognize his destiny, his happiness, when he is immersed and embosomed in it? Why must he lose and seek them through the gates of death? There was no answer in himself, no shadow of an answer.

A sharper gust of the gathering wind suddenly sent his dinghy bounding forward like so much thistledown. Her nose dipped violently into a tall wave and half filled with water. He took in his sail and fell to bailing frantically.

As he glanced up suddenly from a kind of befogging darkness he saw the island clearly now, the masses of the foliage, the cliffs in the distance. The deadly white wall of the surf upon the reef churned high and forbidding, like a leprous moat he must not pass. His boat tossed on more and more violently. No! No chance on earth of making the break, the lagoon. He was on the wrong side of the island!

A sudden sweep of rain struck the side of his face like whips. An angrier darkness descended upon the

waters and the wind now lashed out in a violence of fury that was like a cannonade.

"Yes, death in sight of home — perfectly possible," he said to himself with a faint smile, and on a sudden he felt a weakness in his hands and limbs. How much longer, he asked himself, could he battle against this fury, in this cockleshell with only two hands? Yet a strength, a force outside himself, kept pulling and drawing him, drawing him on like a cable.

Involuntarily he glanced in the direction of the triangular fin. It was not visible now.

"Left me?" he muttered incredulously. "No — hardly."

The thunder of the surf upon the reef was now plainly audible, in spite even of the raging wind. The chances of survival were one in a million, he told himself.

Then a curious swiftness of mental activity seemed to loosen bands of steel in his brain. A dart of illumination, like a lightning flash, shot through his mind. He threw open the nearest portmanteau, drew forth a rug and his clothes, and with an uncanny precision of his hands and fingers rolled the clothes into the rug in a sausagelike shape, passing the seventy-foot line, all he had, about the ends and fastening the slack of the rope about the middle thwart. Then, with a violent effort, he threw the roll overboard behind him.

"A sea anchor," came from his cracking throat as if in triumph. Then the tremendous effort of concentration seemed to leave him limp and powerless. The little boat swept on careening, rising to dizzy heights and falling suddenly into profound hollows, awash with swirling water that he bailed mechanically. The lashing of the water keg gave way and struck his leg violently. But he felt no pain. He lifted the keg and threw it overboard.

"No use — no use at all," he murmured faintly.

The terrific white wall of foam at the reef loomed terrible, like a furious rampart of death raised against the ebbing forces of life. There death alone was strong. It was nearer now — appallingly near — nearer! The gates of death!

The voice! He heard it on a sudden again through the tumult, piercing. The pity and the terror of it!

"Roderic! Roderic!" It was in his ears. He opened his lips as if to speak but he could make no sound.

With a sudden dash his boat shot high and forward, quivering in every fiber of its body, in every nerve of his. The roar of the surf was deafening, the white wall lashing, blinded him. A shock — an explosion of sound and tumult — a sudden sunburst of blinding light and he seemed to be walking peacefully, in a dazzling radiance in his garden. Allene and Maisie were there, approaching him: happiness at last!

From a darkness dreary and endless, troubled by wavering shadows of a thin watery formlessness, from an interminable succession of wearying sounds and noises, dragging, nameless and continuous, Roderic awoke at last, but he was not certain he was awake. For over him he saw the face of Allene and the eyes of Allene were straining into his. The arms of Allene were about him. His bruised inexplicably heavy head was resting on her lap.

That was all natural enough, yet wearisomely perplexing and strange. He had last seen her in the sunlit garden coming with her swaying grace, coming toward him with Maisie's hand in hers. But now — This was not the garden. The somber foliage was dripping, the sky was overcast; it was almost night. Now he lay stretched out and wet and aching in every limb, unable to move for pain and exhaustion.

He endeavored to hold open his heavy drooping eyelids, to smile into Allene's eyes.

Allene's face was tear-stained and distorted with grief!

A sudden ringing cry pierced his ears.

"Roderic! — Roderic! — Speak to me!"

This was even more puzzlingly strange.

"What — what happened — in the garden?" he whispered. Speech was suddenly become so absurdly, so exhaustingly difficult.

"The garden?" she queried, in a voice tremulous with anxiety. "What garden? What do you mean, dear? But, oh — never mind — my darling — my love — you're alive — you're alive — thank God!" And her face fell close to his. He felt her hot breath on his lips, as though she were bent on breathing her warm life into his suddenly dulled one. And she broke into a quivering ecstasy of passionate sobbing. So unlike Allene!

"You have come back to me," she moaned again and again. "You have come back to me, my own!" He wanted to raise his arms, to comfort her. But he could not.

"Come back!" he muttered indistinctly. Why not? — he had only been — but the frost upon his wits would have been laughable if it were not so tragic. To think — the merest trifle of thought — seemed an insuperable undertaking. He lay still for a moment. Gradually he looked about him. The dripping foliage, broken boughs, melancholy desolation, dusk and the thunder of the surf somewhere beyond his feet.

"Not the garden," he murmured finally. Then the scattered threads of memory began languidly, slowly to fall into a web, a pattern. Langley — oh, yes, that Langley — the small skiff — the storm — a terror shook his frame — the storm — oh, he remembered now with a sud-

den crowding rush of detail — the thunder of the surf — the white wall — the gates of death!

" Ah," he breathed with a sudden vast relief, " the same place — the same spot almost — where I landed first — so long ago — and you — oh, it is you, Allene? "

" Oh, yes, dearest, it's I! " Allene was trembling, laughing, and crying. Her tears were streaming but her face was radiant. She gripped him more tightly — and the pain in his arms —but it didn't matter. An abyss, a chaotic darkness, seemed to surround them, and he had the effect of struggling violently to emerge with Allene into light.

" How — did you know I was here? " he whispered.

" How did I know? " she gasped, in a kind of choking triumph. " Because, dearest, I have come here every day since you went away, waiting and praying and longing for you; hoping and calling you, Roderic."

Ah, that was it — the voice — her voice — he had heard.

So beautiful was she as she hung protectively over him, so warmed was he by her tender love — and he had left her! — left her! — that he feared for a moment it must still be a part of the dream, and he closed his eyes again.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CIRCLE

Black smoke was pouring from a heap of burning coco shells, and two native boys were feeding the flames. The peculiar fatty odor that came with the heavy smoke was acrid to the nostrils and caused the eyes to sting, even where Roderic stood, some distance from the burning mound. It brought back to him the memory of the time when he had burned up shells and rinds for old Galbraith. He turned away and smiled. Everything, it seemed, lay in the point of view, in the attitude of the mind. At that time he had felt himself a slave and was miserable. Now he sniffed the unpleasant aroma with satisfaction. He was master here and he was happy.

He walked off toward the house and as he waved a hand to Allene on the veranda, the memory of his return to the island three years earlier, for no reason at all, now came back to him. That was a day of beginning life all afresh.

"It will always be the beginning with us." From the recesses of his memory the words he had spoken to Allene in the cave, in the culminating episode of their love, came floating back to him. That day when he lay for the second time battered at her feet was surely a beginning. But every day was a beginning, — even to-day.

Langley — the poor drunken brute! Recently, upon his last trip to Papeete, he had heard that Langley had piled up his schooner on a reef and ended his brutal be-

sotted existence. Yet he had felt no hostility toward Langley, only a sort of gratitude. For all his brutality, Langley had been one of the instruments that had restored him to his own.

"Will you forgive me, Allene?" he had asked her. He dwelt lingeringly upon the scene in his memory.

"You are back and you are alive. That is all that matters," had been her reply.

He remembered now with what astonishment he had looked upon the development of Allene in his absence. From a clinging woman she had become a chatelaine, alert and amazingly self-reliant. She had kept the natives up to their work, the coco palms bound and the taro patches clear. With the sickness of death in her soul, she had even arranged *pika-nikas* for the natives and kept them contented.

"We must work well, so that the master will approve, when he returns," she had kept repeating to them, at a time when the gnawing fear in her bosom was that he might never return. Her one diversion had been her secret peregrinations to the west beach of the island, to gaze out seaward, to long and to pray for her husband's return.

"Ladies like your lady," had philosophically observed Orui, in singing Allene's praises to Roderic, "were often made queens in the olden times."

"They are queens even to-day," he had answered with a sigh of profound humility; "queens of men's hearts, Orui." And Orui signified that he understood.

"Ah, she has told you," chuckled the garrulous old man, "how she stood on the beach, when Tapena Brucee came back, after you left, and she would not let him land?" Roderic's amazement was lost to old Orui's reminiscent delight. "How splendid she look!" he squeaked hoarsely, "big, tall, straight as a palm tree,

flashing fire from her eyes. 'You must go at once!' she say, 'at once.' And when he say he wanted water, the boys brought him water. But she never move. And all the time she had little pistol in pocket of her pareu-dress. And Brucee, he turn nose of his boat and go back in one hour, like whip dog. How we laugh! She have tole you?"

"No, Orui. She has never told me."

"That, too," he thought, "I had brought upon her — frail little Allene. She is worth about twenty-four of me. And she never told me."

"Where is Maisie?" asked Roderic, as he came up the steps of the veranda.

"In the birdcage," said Allene, with the look of triumphant happiness in the mere thought of Maisie's existence, — a look that children often surprise and sometimes take advantage of. But Maisie was too busy to revel in the pride of her parents.

"With the pickaninnies?" He asked. Allene nodded. By the pickaninnies Roderic meant the brown children of the island whom Maisie, with masterful decision, had elected to school. In the birdcage that Roderic was wont to call his prison or calaboose, Maisie assembled her school four mornings a week, in order to convey to the native children the fruits of civilization from her own limited store.

"What is she teaching them, I wonder," he speculated; "the three 'R's'?"

"Nothing so practical," Allene answered with a laugh. "I believe it's history to-day."

"Blessed if I don't go out and eavesdrop!" declared Roderic and cautiously he stepped out into the garden.

His delight in Maisie was an emotion so full and vivid that he could not speak of it even to Allene. Even to be

discussed with her, it was too intimate. Allene understood it better than he did himself. But fondly he fancied that he did it beneath half-tender half-humorous asides, under little jests at Maisie's expense, under a generally laughing attitude. "Mustn't spoil the child," he thought. Yet she, whom he always envisaged as the child, was fifteen now and remarkably grown and developed for her years. In many respects she was a young woman, with her mother's eyes and her mother's beauty. As "your little sister" he often spoke of her to Allene.

"Do you realize what a little fountain of energy that child is?" he would suddenly demand of Allene with the air of a new startling discovery.

"Do I realize?" Allene would answer. "No! I am rather blind to things that concern Maisie." Then she would sigh pensively and reflect that it was "too bad we are so alone here — she has no companions."

That remark always stirred him to a disproportionate degree. At times he would pass it by in protesting silence. At others he would fairly leap from his chair and grow warmly argumentative. He knew what Allene was thinking of. She was already building feminine air castles — marriage, possibly — for Maisie — Maisie! — of all girls in the world — Maisie! — a mere child. As though there were not time enough for notions like that. He could not help recoiling from the very thought. *His* Maisie! Time enough for that, he thought. Have to take her somewhere where there are people. But Lord, she is still a child.

"Look how happy she is!" he would cry out. "Could you imagine any girl more contented on the face of the earth? It was different with you and me! Yes, it was, Allene dear, and you know it. My home — you know all about that — and your poor father's temper. I am not reflecting on him, mind you, dear! That's the way

the poor man was made. But Maisie — she knows I like her and that you are — rather foolish about her. And, I think, she's rather fond of us!"

Whereat Allene would laugh softly:

"She is made just as you and I, Roderic, with like thoughts and the same desire for life."

"Oh, yes, you may laugh, Allene," he would expostulate. "But I know she hasn't a thought in the world that is away from us. I'll swear to that. She is too happy and contented — and is going to be for a good many years to come. Why cross bridges? — If we have learned one thing, you and I, it's that the present — to-day — is the only day that counts." But there Allene would not argue with him. And he would kiss her, and they would smile mistily into each other's eyes, and so the arguments always ended.

In the garden he walked about softly among the flower beds as though bent on some private errand of his own not even remotely connected with his daughter. But gradually, as though accident had brought him there, he was standing near the birdcage, still seemingly intent upon some stalks and plants. Under the cover of this employment he listened cautiously.

In the native tongue Maisie was telling the children the story of the Crusades. The bizarre names of Godfrey and Bohemond and Tancred caused slight titters among her audience. But they listened raptly to what followed:

"And some of those knights," she went on, "great and mighty chiefs, when they came to those pagan lands that lived in darkness, carved out principalities for themselves, larger, much larger than this island. With their swords and lances — spears — they carved them out and they settled there among the dark people and ruled them and brought them light."

"Exactly like Tapena Vitti Fori!" cried one boy in delighted awe. Roderic was spellbound.

"Yes, exactly like Tapena Vitti Fori — and like other white men and chiefs the world over," Maisie continued, and then as though uttering one single long word in her recital, she added quickly in English, "and I know you are listening, daddy, and laughing at me; why don't you come in and do it better if you can?"

Roderic exploded with muffled laughter.

"That kid!" he muttered to himself, in an ecstasy of welling affection as he walked away and laughed until the tears ran down his face.

"Do you know," he called out, returning to the bird-cage, "that this is a half-holiday?"

"Yes, daddy," was the cheerful answer from within."

"Then you better dismiss the class — don't you think?"

"Yes, dadsie — but the class is over, anyway." In a moment the children came trooping out, crossed the garden with great care and respect and swiftly vanished on their own side of the island.

The declared half-holiday was an anniversary. To the natives an anniversary, a picnic, a holiday, were all one, so long as it spelled gayety and jubilation. They could laugh, wreathe themselves, eat, chatter, sing, and that was what counted. But to Roderic this particular anniversary counted tremendously. It was the third of his returning after his bitter hegira.

It was some time later that Roderic working in his garden among the rosebushes, that now seemed all at once to have attained prosperity, caught himself talking to them as might some aged gardener thrown wholly upon his plants and blooms for society.

"Better than any old Galbraith could ever produce,"

he muttered. "This isn't the same garden at all — a brand-new garden, by George, brand-new!"

On a sudden he observed his daughter Maisie watching him. In her white duck suit, with the shimmer in her hair and sparkling eyes, she might have been Allene sixteen or seventeen years earlier. And yet there was a difference too. There was less repose about her. Less of the quiet magnetism, more of an air of restlessness, of wilful indomitable energy.

"She'll think I'm crazy talking to myself," he thought and flushed slightly. One's children can embarrass one at times even more than strangers.

"Don't you think I've a splendid garden here, Maisie?" he called out with loud cheerfulness, more to cover his confusion than to seek a criticism.

"Yes, daddy," came in her clear voice, "it's lovely. It's just the kind of garden I am going to have myself some day, only nicer still!"

"Here, you young 'baggage'!" he cried, with a sort of uneasy delight. "Is that playing the game? If you've any improvements to suggest come right along and throw them in the pool. I'll do whatever you say, change whatever you like — if it's any good. Out with it — what's on your mind?"

Still erect and graceful, at the small distance from her father, she stood firmly, made no movement to approach nearer and thought for a moment.

"That's just it, daddy," she finally answered with that charming air of spirited energy that only an old curmudgeon could have called impertinence. "I can't tell you, and I can't suggest anything. For the simple reason that I don't know myself yet."

"Ah!" —— he laughed in fond derision of her. "Miss General Information, you've said something there! You are a true critic. That's the way critics are made.

You want something else, but don't know what it is. By George, that's good! Come here! Solemnly and coldly your austere parent is going to kiss you. Coldly, because he thought you were different — and lo! you're like all the rest of all the world of offspring."

Swiftly she came toward him with her irresistible laugh. "Why should I be different, dads?" she put an arm about his neck, rose on her toes and swiftly kissed him. Her caress still brought him a slight dizziness in the brain, a sort of loosening of the heart, of all the knots of his being, as in the days when she was a silken-skinned baby. He still recalled her first crow of delight. "Why should I be different," she repeated, "when I have such an original dad?"

And with a burst of clear rippling laughter she leaped away from him before he could catch her and punish her in the way such audacity should be properly punished. In a streak of white, her slim ankles flashing, she was gone out of his garden, — vanished. The place, bereft of her, seemed suddenly overclouded, lacking something.

"The little demon," he murmured, and with a quizzically sad shake of the head he resumed his work.

Maisie's elusiveness of late now came back to his thoughts. He had noted it with that fugitive preoccupied observation that, he supposed, all parents at first bestow upon children when those young things show signs of growing up. But now, as his hands went on mechanically pruning and spading, weeding and binding, his mind kept dwelling on Maisie. Where, for instance, did she disappear to, as often recently she did disappear of an afternoon, particularly of afternoons when he might be lying down for a nap after dinner? If he asked her, she would reply that she had been "just walking, daddy."

Where did she walk? What on the island interested her most? He had thought he knew all about his

daughter. But on a sudden, with a sort of chill fright, he swung to the opposite extreme and felt overwhelmed by the fear that he knew nothing. Never mind — by to-day or to-morrow he would know more. There should be no nap until he knew. What — spy upon Maisie? No! — that was not spying. A man is responsible for the welfare of his child.

That afternoon, as he lay with closed eyes, listening intently, he heard Maisie leaving the house. From the curtained window he watched. With a throbbing heart he saw Maisie, a book under her arm, swinging with that charm and free grace of hers up the slope toward the spring. Ah, now he understood! Her mother, no doubt, had told her of their first meeting there, filling the child's head with romance! The girl was doubtless making a sort of shrine of the place. No, no! —— That was not a good idea. Unwise to let a young girl's mind run in channels like that! He must do something about it. No use disturbing Allene now in the next room by talking to her about it. He would see. In any case he would soon know.

Softly, with bare feet, carrying his sandals in his hand, he stole out of the room, out of the house, put on his sandals and followed Maisie up the slope. Why he should feel so excited, simply walking in the wake of Maisie, he did not know. He smiled whimsically at himself. Nevertheless he stalked on with rising excitement up the slope. Already he envisaged Maisie sitting there on the old Wishing Stone with her book, reading or daydreaming. Daydreaming? Maisie? —— But she was such a practical young thing.

When he came to the bougainvillea arch, however, between the two trees where his view commanded the stone, Maisie was not there!

Now, that was strange! Where else would the child

go? What else was there to see — or where to go? Not the caves, surely. Oh, no! Maisie was not morbid. She was as healthy-minded a girl as he could imagine. A little too matter-of-fact, he thought at times. A touch more of her mother's romance, of her idealism, her womanliness, might — might, was his somewhat muddled reflection — but that was still to come, perhaps? But where could she have gone to?

Mechanically, but with even a more febrile excitement, he continued on over the crest along the faintly marked path to the westward side of the island. A confusion of thoughts, chaotic, nothing coherent or tangible, was simmering in his brain.

"We'll soon see, Mistress Maisie!" he muttered to himself. The sound of the surf now came more loudly to his ears, seeming to surround him with a deep organ voice that added to the tumult in his mind.

A white figure! Ah, yes, that was Maisie!

She was standing alone, erect as a spear on the very edge of the beach, with thundering waters on the reef almost at her feet, standing erect and gazing seaward.

Roderic caught his breath as though a blow had been suddenly dealt him across the chest. His heart swelled abruptly, and as abruptly shrank back against his lungs.

Maisie — his Maisie — his little daughter! What did she want? She had been the picture of contentment, of happiness! She filled their hearts — his heart — his very soul! What did she crave? What in the world was calling her? Good God! Could it be that she felt imprisoned here as he had felt at Adams Rock? Like the snap of a whip her words about the better garden she meant to make suddenly rang out in his ears. But "she didn't know yet!" Oh, it was very certain she didn't know! Without quite understanding why, he stood suddenly as one overwhelmed in grief — Maisie!

What was calling to her? He gazed at her intently with a dreadful, harrowing, nameless anxiety in his heart. It sapped him abruptly like a sudden fear. Could she too be craving a life other than this, even as he had craved? Was there no end, no fixation? Movement, change, always movement? Was the world calling to her mysteriously as it had called to him?

Maisie was standing erect, shading her eyes with her hand against the westering sun, gazing to the westward — toward the world beyond — toward he knew not what — gazing out across the sea!

AFTERWORD.

In the disillusionizing moment of revelation after reading over this unadorned narrative, in the revulsion of feeling before the accomplished enterprise, I am suddenly pierced by darts of shame. I had set out to write one story and have written another. I had undertaken to show that the dominant influence in every man's destiny is woman. That do what he will, she draws and shapes and molds his life with the power and force of all nature behind her. But it became suddenly clear to me: Why endeavor to prove the obvious?

I perceive, however, that another and a different rhythm has swayed this narrative. With what poor means and lack of skill I hardly dare think, I have in reality set forth the life of one man, his present and his past, his difficulty in recognizing happiness, the endless folly, the tardiness of wisdom, the endless search. What I most secretly felt and thought has recorded itself over and beyond my original intention. What I seem to have written down is no tale about women, of whom Heaven knows, I know nothing. But rather the curve, the infinitesimal arc of a still tinier angle, — of one man's vision, of one man's experience.

Environment and circumstance have doubtless tended to isolate Roderic's peculiar history. But it occurs to me: Is not every man, even in the most populous quarters, truly isolated? Does he not in reality live upon an island in the midst of a thundering sea? Is not one man's story every man's story — and this story perhaps symbolic of most?

I do not know ——

I do not know!